

## **Heroes of the Nations**

A Series of Biographical Studies  
presenting the lives and work  
of certain representative his-  
torical characters, about whom  
have gathered the traditions  
of the nations to which they  
belong, and who have, in the  
majority of instances, been  
accepted as types of the sev-  
eral national ideals.

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FOR FULL LIST SEE END OF THIS VOLUME

## Heroes of the Nations

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FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD

FACTA DUCIS VIVENT OPERIBUSQUE  
GLORIA HERUM.—OVID, IN LIVIAM, §85.  
THE HERO'S DEEDS AND HARD-WON  
FAME SHALL LIVE.

# JOHN WYCLIF





JOHN WYCLIF.

FROM HOUSTON'S MEZZOTINT IN ROLT'S "LIVES OF THE REFORMERS":  
"A TABULA IN COLL. REG. CANTAB."

# JOHN WYCLIF

LAST OF THE SCHOOLMEN AND FIRST  
OF THE ENGLISH REFORMERS

BY

LEWIS SERGEANT

AUTHOR OF "NEW GREECE" ETC.

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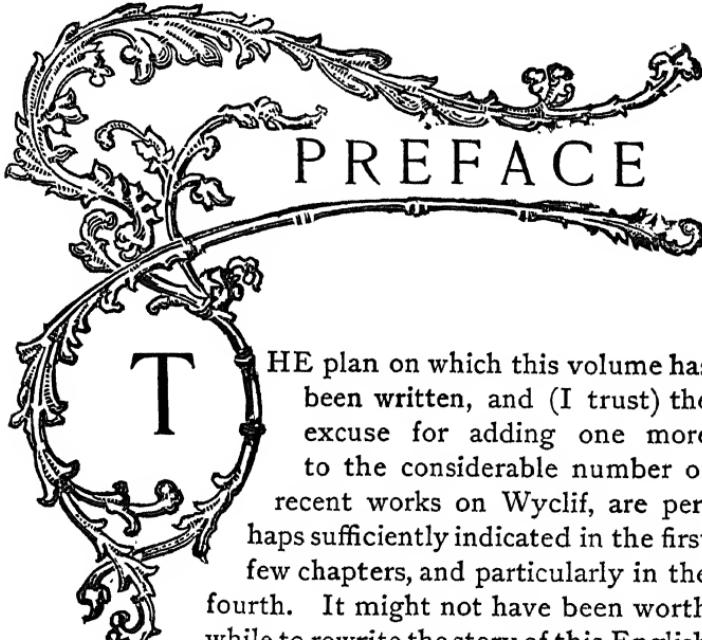
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK                    LONDON  
27 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET        24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND  
*The Knickerbocker Press*  
1908

A<sup>2</sup>  
W082P

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Entered at Stationers' Hall, London  
BY G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

The Knickerbocker Press, New York



## PREFACE

THE plan on which this volume has been written, and (I trust) the excuse for adding one more to the considerable number of recent works on Wyclif, are perhaps sufficiently indicated in the first few chapters, and particularly in the fourth. It might not have been worth while to rewrite the story of this English worthy of the fourteenth century, even with the encouragement of a few fresh facts and sidelights to develop and illustrate his character, if it had not been for the opportunity thus afforded of doing something to popularise the picture of John Wyclif as an Oxford Schoolman, and the picture of the Schoolmen in general as pioneers of the Reformation of Religion and the Revival of Learning.

In a volume not specially intended for laborious students, it would scarcely have been appropriate to enter on a detailed examination of Wyclif's scholastic and controversial writings. Such a work remains to be accomplished, but it cannot well be undertaken until the Wyclif Society has completed its task. For a similar reason I have not introduced a full

bibliography of books and other documents relating to Wyclif. Most of my authorities will be found cited in the text and notes ; but I would here express my special obligation to the editors of various volumes in the Rolls Series, to the writers of sundry articles in the *Dictionary of National Biography*—which has become indispensable to every historical student,—to Mr. R. L. Poole, and Mr. F. D. Matthew.

Of the reputed portraits of Wyclif mentioned in the first chapter,\* six are reproduced in the present volume. Three of the most characteristic of these—the Bale, Hondius, and Houston engravings—do not seem to have been printed since the centuries in which they were respectively produced. At any rate the six are now brought together for the first time, and the reader must be left to determine for himself which of the series is most likely to represent John Wyclif as he lived.

L. S.

NOVEMBER, 1892.

\* See also *Athenæum*, September 17, 1892.





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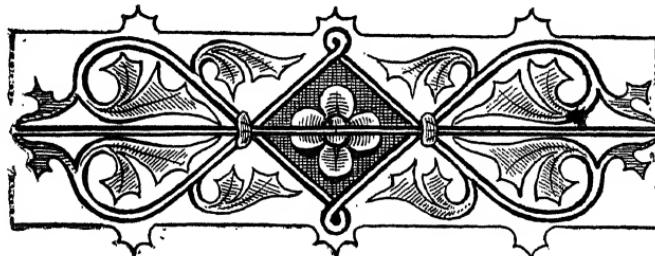
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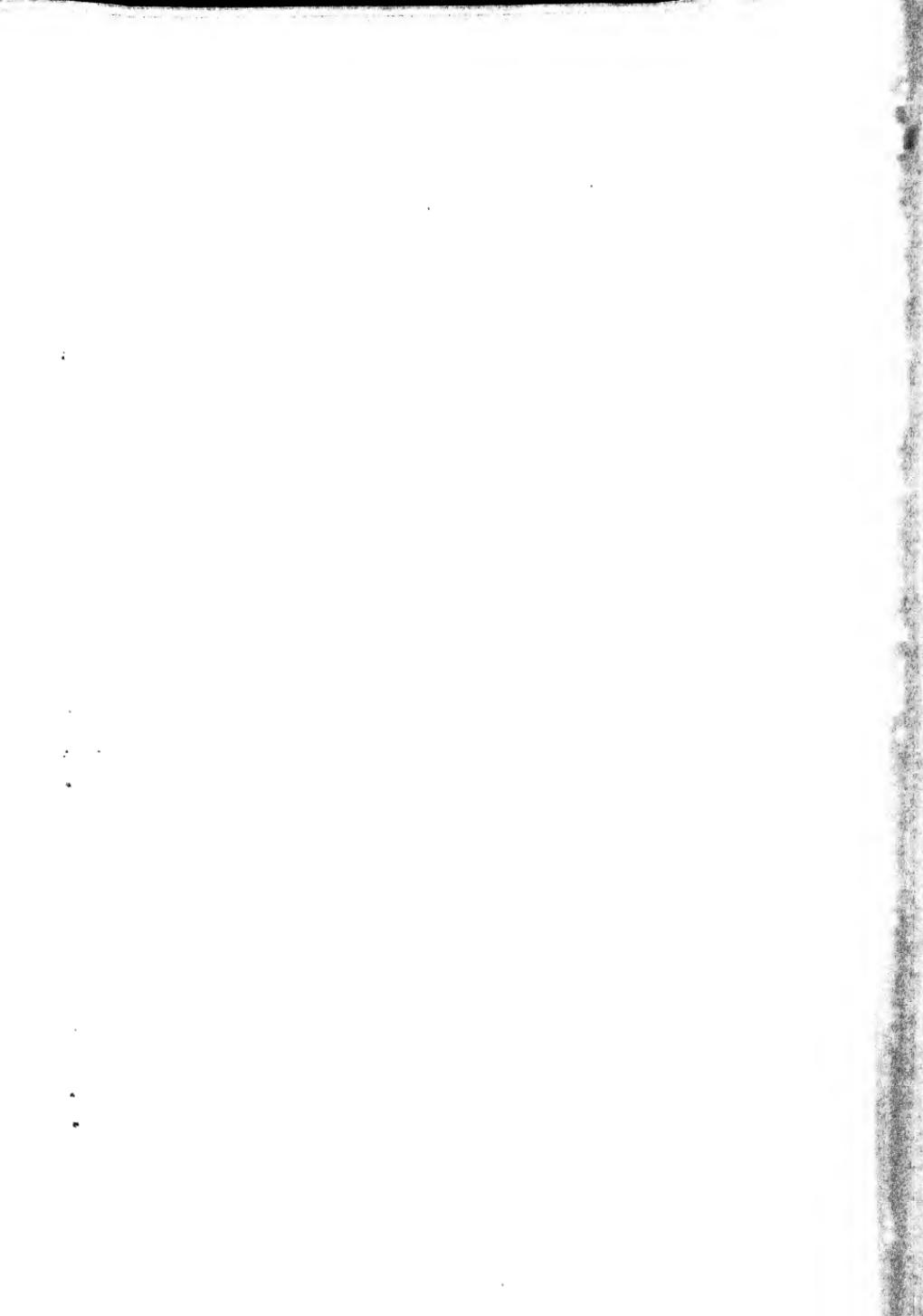
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# JOHN WYCLIF.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE CHARACTER OF WYCLIF.



OME sixty years ago one of the most graphic of our historical painters, Sir David Wilkie, completed for Sir Robert Peel a magnificent panel, which had occupied his thoughts for more than ten years. It represents John Knox, the Scottish Reformer, preaching before the Lords of Congregation at St. Andrew's, on the 10th of June, 1559. It was a time of strife and violence, when religious reform could only be won or defeated by the sword, and when the preaching of a man like Knox was often followed by speedy and startling results. Wilkie has introduced into his picture not merely the calm and com-

placent forms of Murray, Morton, and Argyll, but also, in the stalls above them, the archbishops of St. Andrew's and Glasgow, with Abbot Kennedy, the foremost champions of Rome, so soon to be overtaken by the rising tide of Protestantism. The preacher, terrible in his unrestrained zeal and fervour, bends low down over his pulpit, as though his eager soul and winged words would drag the body after them. A jackman in attendance on the archbishops, standing with his arquebus in his hand, glares fiercely at the bold iconoclast, as though he were on the point of avenging the insult to his master; whilst a young member of the university, standing near the pulpit, is on the alert to defend the preacher in case of need. It could not have been the Admirable Crichton, as Wilkie meant it to be, for James Crichton was not born until the following year; but we may take the figure as representing the liberal movement in the premier university of Scotland at one of its most brilliant epochs.

The whole scene is full of life and motion. The artist has made his picture speak, and we are reminded, as we look at it, of all the long struggle for religious reform in Scotland, which was now on the eve of completion. Not many days after the preaching of that sermon the old order of things was overthrown, the monasteries were dissolved, pictures and images were turned out of the churches, and the revolution to which Knox had devoted himself was accomplished. It would be strange if from such a scene and from such a character the mind did not revert to the events and the men of two hundred

years ago, to the earlier reformation period in England, to the lords and bishops and abbots, to the men of action and the men of study, and, above all, to the zealous leader of the first assault on Rome.

Between John Wyclif and John Knox there is a curious and striking resemblance, in more points than one—such a resemblance as occurs not infrequently between two historical characters who from similar beginnings have pursued a somewhat similar course in life. No one who has made himself familiar with the various portraits and engravings which preserve for us at any rate the traditional features of Wyclif can fail to be arrested when he sees the face of Knox, as Wilkie has reproduced it from earlier pictures. It is not so much that the exact lineaments correspond in such a way as to catch the attention of a casual observer, though even in this sense the parallel is sufficiently remarkable. The type and character of the two heads are the same; you cannot look at one without thinking of the other. The keen intelligent eyes, the drawn features with their ascetic cast, the resolute lips which bespeak an absolutely fearless heart, are present in all the pictures; and a grizzled patriarchal beard serves to deepen the similarity.

But if the physical resemblance between Wyclif and Knox is noteworthy, still more so is the parallel presented by the leading events of their lives. Both were born and bred in the Latin rite, and became conspicuous as secular priests of the Roman Church. Knox, at St. Andrew's, and Wyclif, at Oxford, clung to the courts of their beloved universities, and there,

with a passionate zeal for truth, half led and half followed the men of their day in a moral revolt against the later doctrine of Rome. Both, between the age of forty and fifty, came to be recognised as teachers of religious liberalism; both became king's chaplains and received the royal protection; both protested against the idolatry of the mass and the undue exaltation of the priestly office; both were repeatedly charged with heresy; both defended themselves with the utmost energy, and flung themselves into the path of danger in spite of threats and condemnations. Both stirred and inflamed their hearers in scathing sermons, and both were inhibited from preaching by their earlier patrons when they had served the turn of the politicians. Both were struck down, by apoplexy or paralysis, at the same age, and both died a couple of years later—Wyclif hot with indignation over the papal crusade, and Knox with his latest breath denouncing the massacre of St. Bartholomew's. And the same epitaph might be written over the grave of each—"Here lies one who never feared the face of man."

If there is nothing in such a parallel but a series of simple coincidences, still it may suffice to bring us from the very beginning almost into touch with the religious Reformer of the fourteenth century, by showing in how many essentials he was an antetype and counterpart of the enthusiast of the sixteenth century. Nor will it fail to suggest how near akin may be the pioneers of moral development in every age, even across the interval of five hundred years. If we were to look to our own day for parallels to

the character and career of John Wyclif, we might find none so close and continuous as that which is afforded by the biography of Knox, but at any rate there would be no lack of brief and partial reminders to show how the spiritual needs of successive generations call forth the very qualities which are required to satisfy them, and how in this way also the history of Wyclif has tended to repeat itself. The adventurous pioneer of the college cloister or university lecture-room, the innovating spirit of the tractarian or the homilist, the missionary zeal which organizes and sends forth an army of Christian soldiers, the hardihood which converts a simple priest into a politician, a socialist, a champion of the dregs of humanity—we too have known them all within the limits of a lifetime, and each in many varying forms.

Wyclif was neither a Wesley nor a Simeon, neither a Wilberforce nor a Newman nor a Booth, and yet there is a sense in which he combined the qualities of all these men, vastly as they differ from each other. The distinction of his multiple character arises from the fact that he stands forth so prominently in an age which forms a joint and hinge of religious history. He possessed nothing whatsoever of that which we now understand by the spirit of sectarianism. His claim was to be recognised as abiding in the ancient ways of faith, as upholding or seeking to restore the faith which Christ had founded, and which Christ gave no man the power or authority to change. Standing firm on such a basis, it was impossible that he should be a heretic, or a schis-

matic, or a sectarian. Rome might be heretical, and that is what he called her. The Papacy might be Antichrist, and he fixed the name upon it. Clearly he was right or wrong according as the ground which he took up was evangelical or anti-scriptural —according as he interpreted aright or misinterpreted the message of Christ to the world.

Wyclif and his friends were the earliest protestants, not because they revolted against authority, and wanted a church unfettered by authority, but because they went back to the first and strictest authority of all, and rejected its merely human accretions. They did not carry their protest backward for more than three centuries. They held by the Fathers, and the earlier councils and canons, repudiating the new dogmas and definitions which had been imposed on the Church after the first millennium of the Christian era. The position occupied by this fourteenth-century school of Oxford criticism was one of great dignity and weight, which the prelates of that age could not easily attack. Apart from the royal favour which was accorded to the Wycliffites for many years, it was impossible for the archbishops and bishops to prosecute with a light heart the most distinguished Oxford men of the day, who for a time seem to have been backed by a majority of the resident members of the university. It must be clearly borne in mind that Wyclif's standing was that of a doctor and professor of theology, an ex-master of Balliol, a brilliant lecturer and preacher, a king's chaplain, and a trusted adviser of Parliament. He was, in short, one of the

chief notabilities of his time, and, though the friars were not slow in detecting and denouncing his unorthodox views, their own unpopularity must have made it more difficult for the hierarchy of the Church to take action than it would have been if the Orders had held their peace.

If John Wyclif had been a protestant, and a heresiarch, and nothing more, or if he had been known to us mainly by his controversies and his writings, we might have been content to regard him with a somewhat perfunctory interest as "the morning-star of the Reformation," or as a scholastic theologian who wrote voluminous treatises in dry mediæval Latin and decidedly uncouth English. Truth to tell, the works of Wyclif are not and cannot be made very attractive to men and women of the present day. Their importance in the history of religious belief is incalculable, and to the systematic student of that history they will always be indispensable. For the general reader they are, in their complete form, not only superfluous but even a little misleading. At all events they do not show us the true or the most lovable Wyclif, any more than Milton's controversies with Salmasius show us the author of *Lycidas* at his best. Happily there is enough in the personal history of Wyclif, as a man rather than as a writer, and as an evangelist rather than as a controversialist, to excite interest and affection in no ordinary degree, and to warrant us in treating him as one of England's worthies.

An unbroken chain of evidence, stretching across the five centuries which have passed since his death,

might easily be traced out to show how the tradition of Wyclif's character and achievements—as distinct from any concise written history—has been preserved and handed down in the memory of his countrymen. In the sixteenth century, as one would naturally expect, the protagonist of reform was constantly cited, whether for honour or for reproach, though as yet very little had been rediscovered of his half-obliterated writings. Dr. James, of New College, who was Bodley's librarian at the close of that century, wrote a warm *Apologie for John Wickliffe*, partly in answer to a vicious attack from the Jesuit Parsons. "The early Reformer," says James, "was beloved of all good men for his good life, and greatly admired of his greatest adversaries for his learning and knowledge, both in divinity and humanity. He writ so many large volumes in both as it is almost incredible. . . . Of Ocham and Marsilius he was informed of the pope's intrusions and usurpations upon kings, their crowns and dignities; of Guido de S. Amore and Armachanus he learned the sundry abuses of monks and friars in upholding this usurped power; by Abelard and others he was grounded in the right faith of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; by Bradwardine in the nature of a true soul-justifying faith against merit-mongers and pardoners; finally, by reading Grosthead's works, in whom he seemed to be most conversant, he descried the pope to be open antichrist, by letting [preventing] the gospel to be preached, and by placing unable and unfit men in the Church of God."

Foxe the martyrologist wrote lives of Wyclif, Thorpe, and Cobham, with very inadequate materials so far as the first of the three is concerned. Wyclif, he says, "tooke great paines, protesting (as they said) openlie in the schooles that it was his chiefe and principall purpose and intent to revoke and call back the Church from her idolatrie to some better amendment." And he adds: "The whole glut of monks and begging friers were set on a rage or madnesse which (even as hornets with their sharpe stings) did assaile this good man on every side."

Even Netter of Walden—one of the adversaries referred to by James—admitted that he was "wonderfully astonished at his [Wyclif's] most strong arguments, with the authorities which he had assembled, and with the vehemence and force of his reasons."

These are but casual testimonies to the repute of Wyclif in the two centuries succeeding his death. William Thorpe, one of the younger contemporaries of the Reformer, paid his master a high tribute in the course of his examination for heresy before Archbishop Arundel. "Master John Wyclif," he said (as quoted by Bale), "was considered by many to be the most holy of all the men in his age. He was of emaciated frame, spare, and wellnigh destitute of strength; and he was absolutely blameless in his conduct. Wherefore very many of the chief men of this kingdom, who frequently held counsel with him, were devotedly attached to him, kept a record of what he said, and guided themselves after his manner of life."

These three sentences, it may be observed, are most valuable piece of evidence which we possess beyond what may be gathered from occasional references to himself in Wyclif's works—as to personal characteristics and physical appearance; and they are confirmed by all the side-lights which we are able to obtain of him.

Wyclif's temper in controversial argument was no means always equable—and to say this is only to admit that he had the temper and the method of his day. He takes himself to task in one of his books, on *The Truth of Holy Scripture* (written in 1379), for his shortcomings in this respect. In order that there may be no lack of material, he says, "for the strife which my censors have raised over me, I will say that I have adopted out of the Scriptures a threefold rule of life. First, I should cleanse myself by taking more diligent care concerning the charge which is brought against me that I too readily impart a sinister, vindictive spirit into my legitimate line of argument—if I may be said to have any. As for the imputation of envy, hatred, and rancour under a pretence of malice, I fear, and I admit it with sorrow, this happened to me too frequently, by reason whereof I deserve to suffer much greater blame than has yet been cast upon me. Whilst I importune my God with prayer in respect of my spiritual faults, whereof it is for God alone to know, I will strive more gently to be on my guard henceforth about other matter. Secondly, whilst the devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,

tries to besmirch the good repute of such as he cannot devour on the ground of open wickedness, that he may destroy them in this way by the blame of evil tongues. I, then, being ignorant of any open crime laid to my charge, will patiently endure reproach, seeing that the Apostle says, ‘It is a small thing to be judged of you, or of any man’s judgment.’ Thirdly, whilst I defend myself against their reproaches, I will entreat that the spite and vengeance of my detractors may not add yet another torment to the wounds which I had before.”

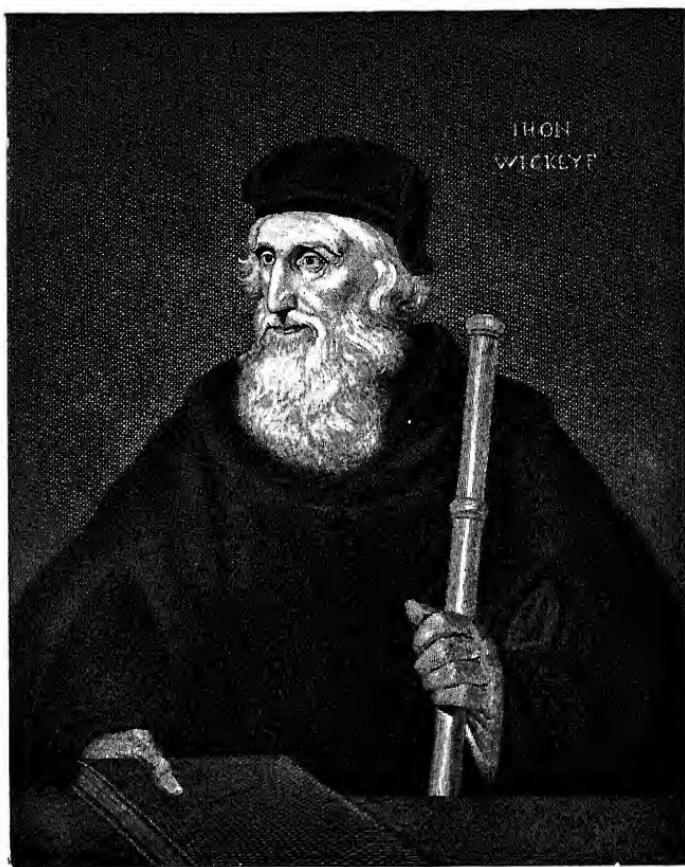
The vein of satire is manifest under the calm dignity of this passage. If Wyclif ever sacrificed his dignity it was by allowing his satire to run to excess, and losing the measure of invective whilst denouncing that which had excited his indignation. Yet it is thoroughly true, as observed by Dr. Shirley—who more than any one man has put this generation on the track of exact knowledge in regard to the life and character of the Reformer—that Wyclif “possessed as few ever did the qualities which give men power over their fellows. His enemies,” Dr. Shirley adds, “ascribed this power to the magic of an ascetic habit; the fact remains engraven upon every line of his life.”

Yet on this question of asceticism, and on the charge of his enemies that he employed it for purposes of display, Wyclif himself deserves to be heard. “It is far from being true,” he says in the book already quoted, “that in the company of my followers I obtrude on the eyes of simple men an excessively abject and penitential air, together with a

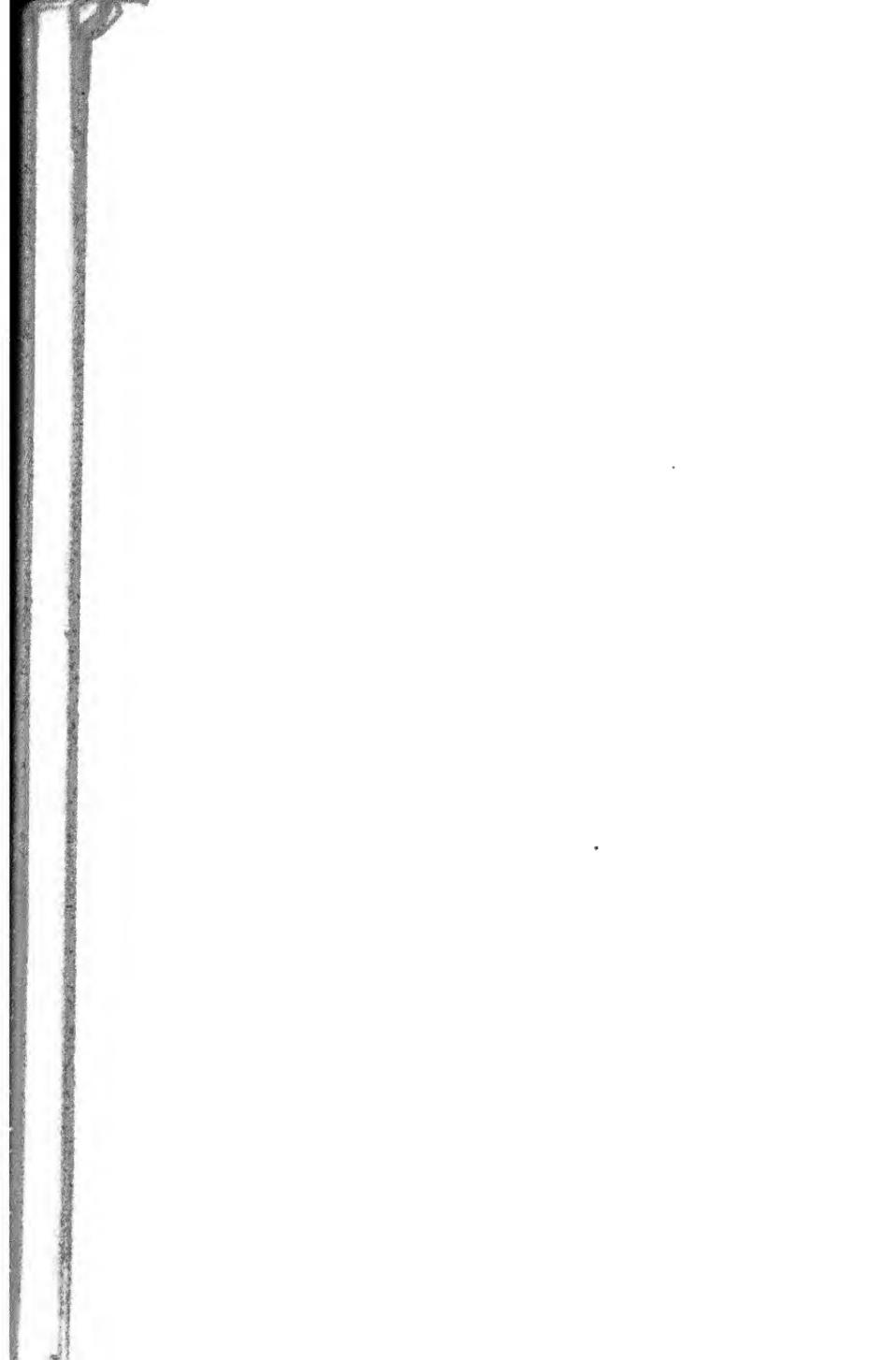
parade of virtue. For amongst my other faults which give me ground for alarm this is one of the greatest, that, by consuming the property of the poor in superfluous food and garments, I fail to afford a pattern to others, whereby the light and rule of a holy life such as I ought to lead might shine through my priestly guise in the sight of the congregation. Nay, I confess with pain that I eat frequently, greedily, and delicately, leading a social life; and if I were to try, like a hypocrite, to make false pretence in this regard, they who sit with me at table would bear witness against me."

Nothing was too bad for Wyclif's most spiteful enemies to say of him. They called him not merely a glutton when he ate and a hypocrite when he fasted, but a turncoat, a traitor, an instrument of the devil, a mirror of hypocrites, a fabricator of lies, John Wicked-believe, and Judas Scarioth. To level coarse insults at Wyclif must have seemed to any man of refinement an odious thing to do; for in his later days, and probably also in his youth, he was a man of feeble constitution. The insistence of his friends at the St. Paul's inquiry, nearly eight years before his death, that he should have the unusual indulgence of a seat during his examination, certainly suggests a knowledge on their part that he stood in need of such indulgence; and there is a similar suggestion in his anxiety at a much earlier age to find parochial duties as near as possible to Oxford and London. Often enough the determining cause which brought a young man to the university, and to the clerical profession, in times when there were very few voca-

JOHN  
WYCLIF



JOHN WYCLIF.  
THE DENBIGH PORTRAIT.



tions for an intellectual mind, was his lack of the robust health and decided taste which were necessary to one who aimed at becoming either a soldier or a merchant, or even a manager of the family estate. Wyclif was the son of a gentleman of good means. He probably owned or had a claim upon the advowson of the rectory of Wycliffe. But if weakness led him to adopt the life of a clergyman, ambition constrained him to follow an active and public career. The known facts of his life chime in with the hypothesis that he was always a man of indifferent health; and yet the fiery soul sustained him in many a hard battle with friars and monks, with the English hierarchy and the papal court. If we were to judge from his fighting attitude alone, it would be difficult to consider him as anything else than a vigorous, hardy, and indefatigable man.

When Wyclif's bones were torn from their grave in Lutterworth churchyard, by an English bishop at the command of a Roman pope, when they were consumed to ashes and thrown into the Swift, thence to be borne, as Fuller said, from brook to river, and from river to ocean, until the seeds of his doctrine had sprung up in every land, Rome was but giving effect to a logically necessary conclusion. The position which Wyclif had taken up against the later teaching of the canons was absolutely uncompromising. "From the eleventh century," he practically said, "the dogma of the Church has been perverted. The popes have been wrong, the councils have been wrong, the decretals are full of heresy. If Rome will not unsay her false doctrine, the

national Churches must repudiate her claim to lead them. She has built up a crazy superstructure on the true foundation ; we must sweep it away, and get back to the life and words of Christ." To Rome, that meant death, and for the Roman Curia it was a simple act of self-preservation to crush Wyclif beneath its censures, and to do all that was possible to bury his record in obscurity. The necessary steps were interrupted by the Schism ; thirty years had passed since the death of Wyclif when the Councils of Rome and Constance took the completion of the work in hand. It was then too late. The writings of the famous Doctor had passed into the keeping of the English and Bohemian universities. The scholars of that day either concealed them or refused to give them to the flames. The doctrines of Wyclif had spread throughout England, Germany, and Austria, and neither the terrors of the Inquisition nor the agonies of a thousand martyrdoms could expel them again.

Nevertheless Wyclif and Wycliffism have been under the ban of Rome from that day to this. No doubt there must have been a few in every generation, ecclesiastics and scholars for the most part, who would be acquainted with the manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with the main facts of Wyclif's life and work, with the contemporary testimony of his friends and enemies, and with, at any rate, some of his writings. Thomas Netter, who was born before Wyclif died, made a collection of papers relating to the controversies and condemnations of the heretical Doctor, under the title

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of *Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico*—“Bundles of Tares . . . together with Wheat.” Would it were possible to suppose that Netter, who was confessor to the grandson of John of Gaunt, Wyclif’s patron and protector for something like fifteen years, had preserved these materials for the purpose of justifying rather than gibbeting the last of the English Schoolmen! Such, at all events, has been their effect in the long run. Bishop Bale of Ossory, who followed Netter after an interval of a century, possessed and made great use of his manuscript, which he did much to elucidate; and many others in more recent times have found it exceedingly serviceable for Wyclif’s defence. Amongst these was Foxe, a friend of Bale, who probably owed to the latter nearly all his materials for the account of Wyclif in the *Acts and Monuments*. Throughout the later reformation period, and in the seventeenth century, the story of Wyclif must have been familiar in England through the works of Foxe, James, Thomas Fuller, and others; but hardly any of these writers knew more than they had been told by Netter, Bale, and the English chroniclers.

A great debt is due from the present generation to the Rev. John Lewis, who, in 1720, published at Oxford his *History of the Life and Sufferings of John Wickliffe*, and collected as many facts and documents as were at that time within his reach. That he should now and then have jumped a little too confidently to his conclusions, and made use of one or two works which had not been sufficiently authenticated, is by no means a matter of surprise.

More than a century later, Dr. Shirley edited the *Fasciculi* for the Rolls Series, adding an introduction and notes which have stood the test of further research with conspicuous and exceptional success. From that time forward it has no longer been possible to reproach English historians and biographers with ignoring or neglecting the importance of Wyclif in the annals of his country, and especially of the English national Church.

Much has been done within the past few years, and especially since the five-hundredth anniversary of Wyclif's death, to re-illumine his darkened record, and to ensure a wider circulation for his principal works. The disinterested labours of the Wyclif Society, and of a considerable number of English and German scholars, have gone far to atone for a long neglect. The time has almost come when John Wyclif may find a worthy and competent biographer, who will be able to set forth the story of his life with a reasonable approach to finality. Meanwhile, it may not be unserviceable to cast that story in a connected and popular form, and at any rate to attempt an estimate of Wyclif's true position in history. Such, indeed, has been the aim of the present writer, who has sought to collect into a focus all that has been accurately ascertained or felicitously surmised concerning one of the most attractive characters in the later Middle Age.

It is impossible to feel at all confident that the true features and character of John Wyclif are presented in any of the portraits which have been

handed down to us. It would be strange indeed if we could trace back the origin of even one of these portraits from the nineteenth century into the fourteenth without a lingering doubt on the subject of its authenticity. Of the existing pictures, whether they are based on knowledge or on imagination, some half-dozen appear worthy of attention; and it is at any rate conceivable, as we look at them, that these should refer to the same original. Allowing for differences of age and aspect, there is a certain family likeness running through them all.

So far as the dates can now be ascertained, the oldest picture is a small half-length woodcut in Bale's *Summary of the Famous Writers of Greater Britain*, published in 1548, more than a hundred and sixty years after Wyclif's death. Bale was a converted monk, who, having been rewarded for his labours and sufferings with the bishopric of Ossory, tried in vain to effect a settlement amongst the "wild Irish" of that see. He was an indefatigable student and collector of manuscripts. It is to him that we owe the preservation of Netter's *Tares of John Wyclif, with Wheat*, and it may well be that he had discovered in some old copy of the English Bible, or other manuscript of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, a sketch of the Reformer's face by a contemporary hand. When we remember that many a valuable parchment has disappeared from view since the antiquaries of the Tudor and Stuart periods had an opportunity of copying or quoting them, we cannot deny the possibility that such a sketch may have been lost to sight whilst the copy survives.

Bale's picture is a sharp profile, turned to the left, and represents Wyclif preaching or lecturing from a stone pulpit, with his right hand and index finger raised in front of him, and his left hand resting on a closed book. He appears to be about fifty years old ; and the sketch is very much what a Tudor draughtsman might have produced from the thumbnail of one of Wyclif's personal disciples. The same woodcut is transferred to *A True Copye of a Prolog*, possibly the work of Purvey, first printed in 1550.

The painting lodged in the rectory of Wycliffe-on-Tees by Dr. Zouch (d. 1815), and intrusted to the charge of his successors in the benefice, is said to be the work of the Flemish portrait-painter, Antonio Moro, who was employed by Philip and Mary in 1554, and who subsequently settled in Madrid. It is unfortunate that Dr. Zouch did not (apparently) leave behind him any precise information as to the history of this picture. It would have been interesting to know on what evidence he vouched for it as "original," seeing that the subject is not quite what one would have expected from a painter who enjoyed the patronage of two particularly bigoted Catholic monarchs. If this picture is Moro's, one would be disposed to date it before 1554. Whitaker suggests in his *History of Richmondshire* that Moro may have seen Bale's woodcut ; and he observes that the two portraits are sufficiently alike to warrant the suggestion. The likeness cannot be called striking, but it is hard to say whence the painter derived his inspiration if not from the woodcut. He pre-

sents the Reformer at a more advanced age, though somewhat less advanced than in what are known as the Dorset and Denbigh portraits. At any rate there is less of an impression of feebleness than in the latter two, both of which show Wyclif leaning on a staff. There is certainly a family likeness in these three pictures. The deep-set eyes, prominent nose, shrunken cheeks, full grey beard, grave yet tender mouth, and slightly stooped shoulders are common to all. The Moro portrait was engraved by Edward Finden for Mr. John Murray, and published by him in 1827.

The Dorset canvas, now kept at Knole Park, has been engraved and reproduced more frequently than any of the rest. In this picture Wyclif holds the staff in his right hand ; the face is turned slightly to his left, and the beard divides by a hand's-breadth on the chest. Like the Denbigh portrait, it is half-length, whilst Moro's is a bust. The Dorset (engraved by George White) is set in an oval frame, with the legend : " Joannes Wiclis S. T. P., Rector de Lutterworth | A tabula penes Nobilissimum Ducem Dorsettiae." The first Duke of Dorset died in 1765, and the portrait does not seem to be earlier than the eighteenth century. The Dorset family, it may be mentioned, were in possession of the Groby (Leicestershire) estates ; and the portrait of course professes to represent the Reformer as he appeared in the last year or two of his tenure of the rectory of Lutterworth. There is another engraving of the same picture signed by Jan Vanhaecken.

Of the Denbigh portrait we have a fine engraving

(fronting the title-page of Lewis's *Life of Wyclif*) "by James Eittler, from a drawing by W. Skelton, taken from a picture in the possession of the Earl of Denbigh." A copy of the portrait hangs in Lutterworth Rectory, and another (by Kingsby?) in the hall of Balliol College, Oxford. In this, as in the Dorset picture, the right hand holds a staff; but the left hand rests upon a book, the face turns to its right, and the beard is not divided.

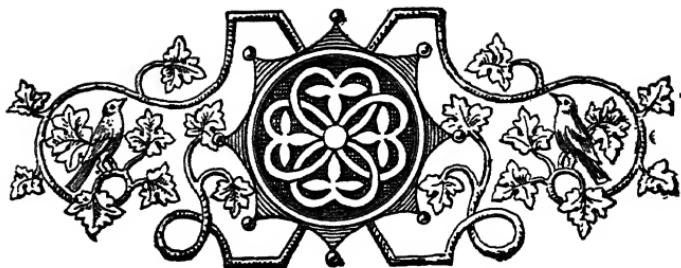
A strangely characteristic portrait is preserved in Queen's College, Cambridge,—a half-length, face turned slightly to the left, age about fifty or fifty-five, vigorous and somewhat aggressive in attitude. It approaches more nearly to the type of Bale's woodcut than to that of the three portraits last mentioned. A mezzotint engraving in an oval frame was prepared by Richard Houston for Rolt's *Lives of the Reformers*, 1759, with the following inscription: "Johannes Wickliffe. Obijt A: 1384. A Tabula in Coll. Reg. Cantab." One could almost imagine the "regius clericus" in his full strength and dignity, just about the time when John of Gaunt was coming to close grips with the wealthy English prelates, coolly shaping his lips to whistle away the first angry criticisms of the friars.

In the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum there are a few cognate engravings, of which the best and the original is that of H. Hondius, reproduced in the present volume. This print bears the inscription: "Ioannes Wiclefus Anglus," and is entered in Bromley's *Catalogue* with the date 1599. It is in fact one of the series included in

Verheiden's *Præstantium . . . Theologorum . . . Effigies*, published in 1602. Evidently the attitude, face, hair, and details of dress are the same in the Cambridge portrait and the engraving of Hondius. One is simply a variation upon the other; and if a guess may be hazarded without knowing the history of the Queen's College portrait, I should say that the latter is based upon Hondius.

A meretricious French print, by B. Picart, dated 1713, represents a framed picture of Wyclif suspended by a rope between two pillars in front of a tomb, and apparently fanning the flames in which his books are being consumed. There is also an engraved plate, bearing the title of *The Parallel Reformers*, and drawing a comparison between Whitfield and Wyclif, with a not very faithful reproduction of the Hondius engraving. Bromley mentions two other prints, "in Boissard," and by Des Rochers, which I have not seen, and these probably exhaust the list of Wyclif pictures, or at any rate of distinct types and noteworthy variations.





## CHAPTER II.

### THE SEETHING OF EUROPE.



ERHAPS the fairest test of the true greatness and importance of any man who has played his part in the shaping of history may be found in the disposition of his admirers to consider, not merely what he did for his country and his age, but also what his circumstances and antecedents had previously done for him. It is a truism to say that every man, great or small, is a product of the conditions which surround him ; but only when we find ourselves face to face with an original and creative mind do we think it worth while to ask how this mind was itself created—how, in fact, the moulder of one generation had been moulded by the generations which preceded him.

Few men better deserve or more justly claim such treatment than John Wyclif, who was unquestion-



JOHN WYCLIF.  
(FROM BALE'S "SUMMARIUM.")



ably a moulder of men and a shaper of history. Wyclif stood at the parting of the ways which led from the Middle Ages to the revival of learning and letters. He was himself the main connecting link between the intellectual hardihood of the Schoolmen and the definite revolt of the Teutonic world from Rome. Essentially throughout his life a secular English clergyman, still his early mental standpoint was on the continent of Europe rather than in England. Rome had so long been the metropolis of religion, as the French universities had been the capitals of scholastic theology and law, that many if not most of Wyclif's predecessors in the long struggle for the emancipation of human thought had lived and died on the continent. The time was at hand for the English Church and the English State to break away from their foreign trammels; but a series of mighty efforts was needed in both cases, and it was only with the eye of faith that Wyclif could see the chains of Romanism and feudalism finally snapped.

It must therefore greatly assist us to arrive at a fair understanding of the problems in which John Wyclif was concerned if we ask ourselves in the first place what was the condition of Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, what were the relations between the Papacy and the different European governments, and especially what effect our constant wars with France would naturally have upon our relations with the popes at Avignon. Narrowing the inquiry from this point, we may note the internal condition of England, having particular regard to the

national character of the English Church, the attitude of the monks and friars towards those whom they denounced as innovators, and the phases of life and thought in the university of Oxford, where Wyclif for the most part lived, and to which he was always devotedly attached.

After the breaking up of the vast empire of Charles the Great, the continent of Europe had come to be parcelled out into a large number of kingdoms, duchies, counties, principalities, and republics, few of them possessing any exceptional importance, whilst the majority were quite insignificant. The most powerful overlordships, apart from that of the popes, were the Holy Roman Empire—extending from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, and dividing the kingdom of Hungary and the Polish dukedoms from western Europe—the Byzantine Empire, the kingdom of France, and the States of the Spanish and Italian peninsulas. Over each and all of these, the popes had claimed not merely a spiritual but a political supremacy.

From the middle of the thirteenth to the close of the fourteenth century—to speak without absolute precision—the great central empire of Europe was gradually shrinking down to proportions roughly corresponding to those of Germany and Austria (proper) at the present moment. On the west and south-west this shrinkage was especially noteworthy. Burgundy had enlarged her borders; Switzerland had already adopted the federal republicanism which she has maintained ever since; the Low Countries, Savoy, and most of northern Italy, had

fallen away. The strength of feudalism had begun to wane; for a long time there was the name of empire without an imperial head or bond. All that was not German, but only conventionally Roman, tended to separate from the solid core, whilst the true Germany and the Teutonic spirit remained, as they had always been, the chief rival and obstacle of the Papacy on the continent.

The kingdom of Castile, in which Leon had been absorbed, was steadily forcing the Moors of Granada upon the Mediterranean shore. But before the expulsion of Africa from Spain was completed, Asia had begun to overflow into the other extremity of southern Europe, and the Byzantine Empire became the mere shadow of its former greatness. The Crusaders had but irritated and provoked the vast nomadic fanaticism by which western Asia and northern Africa were penetrated and dominated. The Christians had gained some slight successes on the Syrian coast, but they could not long maintain their footing. The king of Jerusalem, the prince of Antioch, the counts of Jaffa, Nablous, and Edessa, with other petty local potentates, were brushed aside by sultans scarcely less petty than themselves, and the Mahomedan flood swept strongly and steadily onward until, at the close of the thirteenth century, Ottoman Turks had mastered almost the whole of Asia Minor. Half a century later they had crossed the Bosphorus into Europe.

This was a disturbing element, not to say an abiding cause of panic, for the nations of the south and west; and the fact must enter into every considera-

tion of the state of Europe in the fourteenth century. The Papacy and Chivalry between them were responsible for the crusades, and it was on the popes and barons that the worst immediate results of the irruption were to fall. Apart from the rash aggressions of the earlier crusades, which clearly (to us in these days) involved the ultimate rebound of the Turk into Europe, the light-hearted wickedness of the fourth crusade was enough in itself to account for all that followed. The Marquis of Montferrat, the Count of Flanders, and the host of adventurers in their train, presumably stirred to religious enthusiasm against the infidel, devoted themselves to two years of ravage and plunder in Christian Europe. They pillaged Constantinople, usurped the Empire of Byzantium, and destroyed the human barrier against barbarism, which needed to be strengthened by every conceivable means. This was in 1202-1204. The Byzantine Greeks regained their empire in 1261; but by this time the natural guards and sentinels of Europe were not only demoralised beyond recovery, but also completely alienated from the Church and the States of the west.

It had been proved by this expedition, and it was confirmed on many occasions within the next century and a half, that the descent was easy from militant chivalry to wholesale rapine. In the fourteenth century it had become apparent that Chivalry, the Feudalism on which it was based, and the Papacy which had played into the hands of both, were involved in a common catastrophe. The popes had lost their hegemony, the barons were losing their

feudal authority, and at the moment of greatest need there was no chance of a combination of forces such as would have sufficed to drive back the Turkish hordes. Edward III. proposed it to the French king, and Pope John proposed it to more than one of the monarchs ; but it was too late. The seething of Europe had begun. The seventy years' exile of the popes at Avignon, the hundred years' war between England and France, the desperate civil wars in both those countries, were already foredoomed and inevitable. The establishment of the new order in western Christendom could not come to pass—as the history of the world was being developed—save at the cost of liberty and civilisation in the Eastern Empire.

Whilst the Turk was forcing the gates of Europe, Calais was sacked, and the battles of Crécy and Poitiers were fought and won. Whilst the infidels overran Thrace and closed round the devoted city of Constantinople, two of the most powerful Christian nations were exhausting their strength in wars which had but the slightest shadow of justification. The delusive treaty of Brétigny (1360), which coincided in date with the capture of Adrianople, gave to England the provinces of Gascony, Guienne, Poitou, Saintonge, Angoumais, and Limousin, with Calais and Ponthieu in the north-east ; and, though much of the territory was lost again before the reign of Edward had closed, France was convulsed by invasion and civil war for another sixty years.

Such was the condition of Europe during the life of Wyclif and of the youngest of his disciples. He

preached to ears which were never free from ghastly records of slaughter, and to souls perpetually startled by the portents of an eventful epoch.

The story of the Papacy itself in the fourteenth century is as important and striking as that of any of the larger European States. The State of the Church had been built up by successive papal assumptions on the basis of religious authority perverted into secular feudalism, and by means of extravagant tolls levied upon the religious devotion of Christendom. The dramatic surrender of the Emperor Henry at Canossa in 1077, followed by the bequest of the Countess of Modena a few years later, set the coping-stone on a principality which then extended from the Lombard kingdom of Naples to the banks of the river Po. The subjection of England by Innocent III., at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was as thorough in its way as that of Germany by Gregory VII.; for John not only resigned his crown and kingdom into the hands of the papal legate, but received them back in the character of a tributary vassal. And, though John's cleverness overreached itself, yet he doubtless saw clearly enough, as other monarchs saw before and afterwards, that resistance to the Pope meant a paralysing isolation, whilst submission to him brought effective aid and solid advantages. As a matter of fact, Innocent actively assisted the English King against his subjects from the moment when his contumacy came to an end.

The Italian Lothario Conti, known to us as Innocent III., raised the assumptions and usurpations of Rome to the highest pitch. He imposed submission

on Castile, Portugal, and Arragon, dictated to Philip Augustus of France, and even received the spiritual homage of the Eastern Empire (from the usurper Baldwin), and of the kings of Bulgaria and Armenia. "In each of the three leading objects which Rome had pursued," says Hallam, "independent sovereignty, supremacy over the Christian Church, control over the princes of the earth, it was the fortune of this pontiff to conquer."

Precisely in the fulness of its power and authority, the Papacy began to work its own downfall. Its ever increasing and accumulated assumptions were extended from the reigning monarch to the humblest of his subjects, from national and international relations to the bed and board of every individual in every State of Christendom, until at last the very nausea of oppression produced inevitable revolt. Christianity would have been repudiated and rejected by the nations of Europe if they had not distinguished between the faith itself and the guardians of the faith who had violated it. For not only religion, but even morality and the sanctions of society were made to depend on the subtleties of fallible men, who, whilst discrediting the intellect, applied their own imperfect intellects to the definition of good and evil for their fellow-creatures.

And this was not by any means the worst of the spiritual assumption, for the Pope claimed power, after laying down the law of good and evil, to dispense men from the obligation to do good, and to indulge them in the commission of evil. Pope Innocent, and doctors of the Church like St. Thomas

Aquinas, declared that the Supreme Pontiff, in the plenitude of his power, might lawfully dispense with the law—a claim which is not set up for the Deity himself, nor by nature, as interpreted by their works. Obstructions may divert the spiritual and physical laws, but only as proceeding from a different source, and from a cause external to the law. When the authority which had promulgated the law of right and wrong was found dispensing with the right and selling indulgences for the wrong, it was no longer regarded as a lawgiver. Of necessity, and with an impassioned conviction of truth, devout men considered it as an obstruction to moral law.

Before the fourteenth century dawned this conviction had penetrated many a thoughtful mind, and the wonder is that such a clear and cogent truth, put forward by Wyclif and his friends with logical completeness, should not have won the battle of Reformation at least a century and a half before it was actually won. But, in point of fact, the reformation of religion, in England as in Germany, passed through several phases. The awakening of the popular conscience was one of these phases ; but it could not reach its full development apart from the political rejection of the papal assumptions, the arbitrary suppression of the monastic Orders, and the legislative conversion of the national Church. All these things were on their way, and Wyclif brought them as near to realisation as any man could have done in the fourteenth century. But the hour had not struck, and the instruments were not all ready to hand.

It is true that the movement in England, which Wyclif inspired and led, came nearer to success than has sometimes been supposed. The suppression of monasteries actually began in the generation after his death. Parliament had declared boldly against the Pope; and if the Commons had been made of sterner stuff—if they had realised their strength, and had not been driven into panic by the revolt of the peasants, they might, even in the fourteenth century, have moulded the national Church on the nation's will. There was indeed no discontinuity in the protest which our ancestors raised against the innovations of Rome. Wyclif drew a line at the close of the first Christian millennium, and declared that after the thousandth year of Christ Satan was loosed, and Antichrist was enthroned in the pontifical chair. At any rate from the eleventh century there was never a time in England when the spiritual and temporal pretensions of the Popes were not categorically opposed. The Schoolmen headed the protest on the intellectual side. Lanfranc complained of Berengar that he wished to ignore the sacred sanctions, and to have recourse to mere logic and argument. This was the point at which Scholasticism had its origin; the protest of the Schoolmen was against the intolerable claim of Rome that her traditional sanctions and authorities should impose a limit upon intellect, morals, and individual conscience.

And if the popular mind, and the minds of a few scholars and preachers here and there, were outraged and alienated by the spiritual usurpations of the Papacy, its temporal and political assumptions were

resisted in each successive generation, however intermittently, by the monarchs and statesmen of the day. Henry II. and John both measured swords against the enemy of their country. Each of them, indeed, found his blade too short, and extricated himself from his difficulty by a politic compromise. It may even be argued that the payment of tribute from 1213 to 1333 rather assisted than hindered the growth of the national independence, in an age when the temporal power of Rome was at its zenith. The tribute did not prevent Henry III. and Edward I. from continuing the struggle. A like combative spirit was displayed by the Holy Roman Empire. The extreme personal humiliation of the Emperor Henry IV. and Frederick Barbarossa merely point us to two conspicuous instances of German resistance.

Up to the close of the thirteenth century, these contests of the civil against the ecclesiastical authority, and of the national spirit against the encroachments of Rome, appeared to have little practical or permanent result. It was reserved for France to give the Papacy its first effectual check, and to stagger it by a blow from which it never entirely recovered.

Benedict Cajetano, Pope Boniface VIII., was the most capable man and the most politically aggressive pontiff who had sat in the chair of St. Peter since Innocent III.; but he carried the policy of his predecessor to a wild extreme, and invited the active hostility by which he was speedily overwhelmed. It is true that in Edward I. of England and Philip the Fair of France he had encountered two monarchs of more than ordinary mettle, and that a conflict with

one or both of them was virtually inevitable. As it happened, he had to fight them both ; and the manner in which he launched his lightnings and hurled his thunderbolts showed with how light a heart this ill-fated Pope sought to assert his authority as the vice-gerent of God on earth.

Revolt against Rome was ripe in every sense. She had not only encroached on the civil governments, but also harassed and offended the hierarchies of the national Churches. By her interdicts, excommunications, and depositions, she had exasperated monarchs and peoples alike. She had asserted the rights of mandate and investiture, and frequently overruled the elections of metropolitans and bishops, ignoring the claims of the clergy as well as of the Crown. She had exacted large sums of money in the shape of *annata* on promotions and translations, of direct levies from the Churches, and of tribute from the monarchs. She had set up the papal Curia as a jurisdiction external to every country, yet claiming supremacy in all; and she authorised her legates to override the decisions of the hierarchies, and even the provincial councils of the national Churches. When, on the other hand, clergy, monks, or friars abused their privileges to the manifest detriment of the State, Rome almost invariably encouraged her subordinates to defy and resist the civil power, claiming for them both a moral and a material immunity against the jurisdictions of the land in which they lived.

The vast possessions of the clergy and religious Orders, especially after the new corporations of friars

had forsaken their original vows of poverty, excited the alarm, not to say the cupidity of the monarchs, and whetted the edge of their hostility to Rome. England, France, the Empire, and Castile had at different times taken measures to curtail the growing evil. In England alone, it was found in the reign of Edward I., something like one half of the knights' fees, which had contributed to the revenues of the Crown under William the Norman, had passed into the hands of the clergy and monks. In order to check further diversions of the national wealth into the coffers of the Church, the Statute of Mortmain (1279) forbade the alienation of estates to religious corporations, under pain of forfeiture. But the statutes of those days did not grind very small, and the mischief went on.

Meanwhile the English Church, from motives amongst which we may fairly include those of national independence and patriotism, had paid subsidies from their growing revenues to the crippled resources of the State. This had been done in the reign of Henry III., and was continued in the reign of Edward, the Church virtually admitting its liability to taxation, but making an occasional stand in regard to the amount. Towards the end of the thirteenth century the King was badly in want of money, and he was not very particular as to the means of raising it. He made heavier demands upon the clergy, to the extent of one fifth and even one half of their income, until in self-defence they denied their liability altogether. Edward threatened to confiscate their property, and partly carried out his threat;

whereupon the clergy appealed to the Pope, contending that their aids were due to Rome alone.

The same struggle was proceeding at the same time upon the continent. Boniface had begun his pontificate by calling on the monarchs of Europe to settle their differences by referring them to his arbitrament. The sincerity of this plausible injunction may be measured by the fact that he was soon offering, for his own purposes, to dethrone the Emperor Albert and to give his crown to Charles of Valois. In this and other matters the Pope laid himself open to the suspicion that his aim was not so much to maintain peace in Christendom as to fish in troubled waters.

The trial of strength between Boniface and Philip endured throughout the seven years of that fatal pontificate. The first blow was struck by Boniface, who in peremptory language required the French and English kings to abstain from laying any taxations whatever upon the clergy. This was not the only form of papal interference, but it aggravated and governed all the rest. The challenge was unmistakable, and Philip took it up at once. He refused to obey the Pope, who then issued his bull *Clericis laicos*, declaring in general terms, for the benefit of Philip, Edward, and anyone else whom it might concern, that monarchs had no right to exact taxes or aids from the clergy, even in the shape of voluntary grants, without the sanction of the Holy Father. Philip's answer was to prohibit the export of gold, silver, precious stones, food, and the munitions of war—a prohibition which of course included

the aids of the clergy and the contributions of the faithful. Placed thus between two injunctions, the clergy ended by paying to the nearest creditor; the Kings obtained their subsidies, and the Pope was left to starve.

The quarrel continued with varying fortunes. An award delivered by Boniface in an arbitration between Philip and his enemies, being regarded in Paris as manifestly unjust and prejudiced, was torn up by the Count d'Artois in the King's presence. The "little bull" of 1300, in which Boniface wrote—"We desire you to know that you are subject to us in temporal as well as in spiritual affairs," was ordered to be publicly burned. The Pope stormed and threatened. Philip threw himself on the support of the States-General, which was apparently the first assembly of its kind in France, summoned within forty years of the first English Parliament; and the three orders of nobles, clergy, and commons addressed three distinct memorials to the Pope, even the clergy refusing to admit the temporal supremacy of Rome. Nevertheless some of the bishops obeyed the summons of Boniface to a council which was to consider and determine upon the offences of their King; whereupon Philip promptly confiscated their property, and took occasion at the same time to throw upon the absentees the growing scandal and odium of the Inquisition.

By openly claiming the temporal supremacy, Boniface had gone too far to retreat. Backed by his most uncompromising supporters, and impelled by the complaints of the French bishops, he drew up

the famous bull, *Unam sanctam* (June, 1302), which brought to a point the infatuated and fatal claim of universal temporal dominion. The Church, he declared, is one holy and undivided body, having but a single head. “The spiritual and the temporal sword are alike under the control of the Church; the latter must be employed by those who wear it on behalf of the Church, and the former by the Church itself—the former wielded by a priestly hand, the latter by the hand of monarchs and soldiers, though only at the summons and under the sanction of the priest. Moreover, the one sword ought to be subject to the other, and the temporal to the spiritual authority. . . . Furthermore” [or perhaps “from henceforth,” *porro*] “we declare, state, lay down and pronounce, that it is an indispensable article of faith for every human being that he is a subject of the Roman pontiff.”

No words could be more precise or definite than these. Their chief effect was to seal the doom of Boniface, and to explode the claim of Rome to any kind of temporal sovereignty outside the States of the Church. In the course of a few months Philip was excommunicated, Boniface was arraigned before the French Estates, the legitimacy of his election was solemnly impugned, his heresies were denounced, appeal was made from him to a new and legitimate Pope, and this appeal was endorsed by the States-General, by a majority of the secular clergy, by the religious Orders, and by the University of Paris. Philip was determined to lose nothing for want of audacity. He sent his avocat-royal, with the two

Cardinals Colonna who had previously taken refuge in Paris, to seize the person of the Pope at Anagni; and, though Boniface was rescued and conveyed to Rome, he died a few days later from the shock of his humiliation. And so the saying of the ex-Pope Celestine, whom Boniface had compelled to resign, and afterwards imprisoned, was fulfilled: "This cardinal, who stole like a fox into the chair of St. Peter, will have the reign of a lion and the death of a dog."

"Imprisoned, insulted, deprived eventually of life by the violence of Philip, a prince excommunicated, and who had gone all lengths in defying and despising the papal jurisdiction, Boniface," says Hallam, "had every claim to be avenged by the inheritors of the same spiritual dominion. When Benedict XI. rescinded the bulls of his predecessor, and admitted Philip the Fair to communion without insisting on any concessions, he acted perhaps prudently, but gave a fatal blow to the temporal authority at Rome."

Blow after blow was given to that authority. On the death of Boniface the cardinals had hastily elected Benedict XI., who died within the year. The next pope was Philip's nominee, and he transferred the headquarters of the Papacy to Avignon. There, for seventy-three years, seven popes,\* all Frenchmen,

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\* 1305, Clement V.; 1316, John XXII.; 1334, Benedict XII.; 1342, Clement VI.; 1352, Innocent VI.; 1362, Urban V.; 1371, Gregory XI. Gregory returned to Rome in 1378, and died there in the same year, being succeeded by Urban VI. at Rome and Clement VII. at Avignon.

with a French majority in the College of Cardinals, abode under the shelter of the kings of France. Rome herself, meanwhile, was successively courted and almost won by Ludwig of Bavaria and the tribune Rienzi; and throughout western Christendom the minds of the faithful were profoundly disturbed, not to say unstrung, by what seemed to be the irreparable ruin of the Vicars of Christ.

Such was the condition of Europe and of the Papacy when John Wyclif was born; and Wyclif himself, in the ripeness of life and the fulness of activity, was to witness the great Schism of 1378, by which the diminished authority of Rome was to be still further impaired and depreciated.

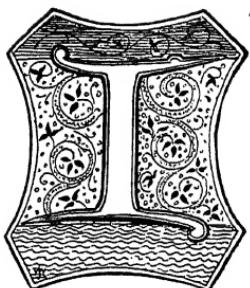
He might have repeated to himself in his old age, with pardonable exultation, that eloquent sentence of the historian of ancient and secular Rome: “*Habent imperia suos terminos; huc cum venerint, sistunt, retrocedunt, ruunt.*”





## CHAPTER III.

### MONKS AND FRIARS.



T would be impossible to plot out a faithful picture of the life and character of Wyclif without adding two other sketches to the background, which already reveals the aggressions and the subjection of the Papacy in the fourteenth century. No one who wishes

to bring that picture clearly before his mind can afford to leave out of sight the striking figures of the monks and friars by whom the path of the earlier and later Reformers was beset. Still less could the career of Wyclif be appreciated by one who has not made himself in some degree familiar with the Schoolmen whose teaching Wyclif imbibed at Oxford, and whose progressive ideas and ardent love of truth he interpreted to the humblest of his fellow-countrymen.



DOMINICAN (BLACK) FRIAR. 13TH CENTURY.  
(FROM MIGNE'S "ENCYCLOPÉDIE.")



Let us begin by recalling to memory the more notable monastic Orders of the Christian Church, and especially their institutions and representatives in England, as they existed during the Reformation epoch—an epoch, be it always borne in mind, by no means coincident with the reigns of a few Tudor monarchs, but inaugurated by the intellectual courage of the Schoolmen, prepared by the combative independence of the Plantagenet kings, and merely arriving at its crisis in the sixteenth century.

Seven hundred years divided St. Benedict and his sister Scholastica from the Spaniard Dominic and the Italian Francis of Assisi, who founded the two Orders of Preaching and Begging Friars. The vows of the Benedictine monks bound the members of this Order to self-abnegation, chastity, and other virtues, and the guiding idea of the founder seems to have been that of refuge from the vices, troubles, and distractions of the world. The Cistercians, Carthusians, and other monastic bodies which had been established between the years 900 and 1200 were governed in the main by Benedict's rules, and may be regarded as Benedictines themselves. Ecclesiastical writers have claimed for the same Order no fewer than forty popes, two hundred cardinals, and something like five thousand archbishops and bishops. From the earliest systematic introduction of Christianity into England the Benedictines played an active part in the conversion of the people. They accumulated vast wealth, and secured for themselves a strong vantage-ground by the establishment of abbeys and monasteries. Comprised within the

borders of the Church, yet not strictly a part of the Church organism, this Order occupied a comparatively independent position in regard to the ecclesiastical and the secular authorities, in alliance with Rome but not absolutely subject to her, often opposing its interests to those of Church, Crown, and People, powerful as a friend or as an enemy, yet "dead in law," and crippled by statutory disabilities.

With the accumulation of wealth and privileges, it was inevitable that abuses and corruptions should find their way into the monasteries, and that an intense jealousy should be aroused against these privileged communities, both amongst the secular clergy and amongst the people at large. The unquestioned annals of the time show that there was ample ground for the protests raised on all hands against the immunities as well as the morals of the monks. Very possibly, indeed, there has been too much generalisation from particular instances, and a too wholesale condemnation of houses which in many cases were homes of unaffected piety and distinguished learning. The Carthusians and Bernardines maintained to the last a special repute for learning and virtue. The abounding charity of the monastic bodies has never been denied, and that something less than justice has been done to their average and relative morality is at once a natural supposition and capable of proof.

There is no need of exaggeration in order to justify the portraits drawn by Langland and Chaucer, by Wyclif and his Oxford sympathisers, by the Poor Priests and the song-writers of the **Lollard**

movement. They painted what they saw, and their pictures were recognised as true. If the satires had been mere lampoons, the songs and sermons nothing more than scandalous exaggerations, England would not have witnessed a dissolution of monasteries early in the fifteenth century; for no measure of that kind would have been ventured upon in advance of popular opinion. One hundred and ten years before the beginning of the great dissolution in the reign of Henry VIII., it is recorded that more than a hundred religious houses were suppressed; so closely is the parallel drawn between the final reformation and its first rehearsal.

The fact is that the abbots and monks had been corrupted by their wealth, as the secular clergy had been corrupted by their participation in politics and their relaxation of religious observances. The higher regulars, who were still supposed to shape their lives by the *regula monachorum*, had the faults and weaknesses shared by all close corporations. Their policy was to add land to land and house to house, to maintain the dignity and revenues of their abbeys, and to live, each according to his rank, as pleasant and companionable men of the world. Chaucer's monk, whom the poet describes on his April jaunt to Canterbury, was fond of sport and display, of horses and hounds:

“ An out-rider that lovèd venerye;  
A manly man, to be an abbot able,  
Ful many a dainty horse had he in stable.  
. . . . The rule of Saint Maure and of Saint Beneyt,  
Because that it was old and somdel strayt,

This ilke monke let forby him pace,  
And held after the newe world . . .  
Therefore he was a pricasour aright;  
Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl in flight;  
Of priking and of hunting for the hare  
Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare."

It was a dissolute age; the country was demoralised by war, by the ostentation of the rich and the desperate impoverishment of the masses, by the almost complete immunity of the clergy from civil constraint, and by the license in which many of them as a natural consequence indulged. Of course the manners and morals of the time are not to be measured by the standard which is set up in our own days. A clergyman of the nineteenth century does not frequent ale-houses, attend cock-fights and boxing-matches, or rule the roost at boisterous convivialities. He does not even hunt with a good conscience, and if he dices or plays cards he does not indulge the taste in a mixed company, or in places of public resort. All these things were done freely and openly by jovial monks and seculars in the fourteenth century. The parish parsons were generally too poor for showy vices, but the poorest men could be "common ale-goers," and throw the dice for the cost of a tankard. From lowest to highest—not without exceptions—there was an ascending scale of vicious ostentation. The court, the chase, the tournament, and the pilgrimage itself were frequently mere parades of wantonness, and they were constantly attended by the regular clergy—by abbots and abbesses, priors, monks, and nuns.

A century before the birth of Wyclif, the monks were confronted with dangerous rivals, who, whilst they began by carrying back the minds of men to the earlier models of ascetic discipline, with marvellous promptitude imitated and surpassed the evil examples of their predecessors. In the thirteenth century alone, as many as seven or eight new Orders of religious brethren found their way to England. In London, at Oxford and Cambridge, and at scores of places throughout the country, they received gifts of houses and land, forgetting their fervour in proportion as they accumulated their wealth. Amongst them were the Crossed or Crutched Friars, the Augustinian Friars, the Penitential Friars, and the Carmelites or White Friars. But the largest and most famous of the new Orders were the Dominicans and Franciscans, whose arrival in England and Oxford was practically simultaneous.

It would be difficult to find a greater contrast amongst the devoted pioneers of the Catholic Church than that which is afforded by the two saints Benedict and Dominic. Both set the stamp of their vigorous personality upon many succeeding ages; and the brotherhoods which they founded have done as much as any other single cause to determine the character of their Church in its relations with the world. It is in the ideas which underlie their institutions that the contrast becomes marked and significant. The Benedictine monasteries, brotherhoods and sisterhoods alike, were in the first place essentially refuges from the world. In the case of Benedict himself, and of his immediate followers,

the refuge was sought not only against a turbulent and vicious world, but also against the formal and unsatisfying character of the teaching and worship of the day. The English monasteries retained to some extent their specially defensive and social features; men and women resorted to them in order to live a peaceful, regular, and reasonably holy life; and, apart from the abuses which crept into the system, prevailing in some houses but conspicuously absent from the best, this was their object and the end which they achieved.

The Castilian Dominic had a very different aim in founding his Order of Preaching (Black) Friars. The Church had reached a stage at which the desire for protection against secular persecutions could no longer be a pressing cause of retirement from the world. What Dominic felt himself moved to establish was a mission into the world, not a refuge from it. His plan was to send forth missionaries with a distinct and well considered purpose; aggression was the moving principle of his life and of his teaching. He was the flaming sword of the Church, devoted to the persecution and destruction of heretics, for the saving of their souls and the relief of true religion. He has a threefold title to fame, such as few amongst the great military conquerors have surpassed. He it was who devised the terrible campaigns against the Albigenses, who inspired the creation of the courts of Inquisition, and who sent out the Preaching Friars against the sheep which had wandered from the fold.

The friars had his own example to guide and

encourage them. The fiery fanatic himself undertook to wrestle with the ill-fated adherents of Pierre de Vaud, and the other heretics of Languedoc; and, when his preaching had failed to reach their souls, the Inquisitors were called in to deal with their bodies. It was a system beautiful in its simplicity; but to do it justice required a subtle and keenly tempered mind.

Innocent III. found it possible in the thirteenth century to set up in parts of Italy, France, and Spain, these irregular courts of divine vicarial justice, having the power of life and death, yet denying the very semblance of legality to the accused. Not only could he create them by his own fiat, but he was also able to call in the aid of the executive arm, and to throw the expenses of his tribunal on the State. In 1233, Gregory IX. expressly assigned the control of the Inquisition to the Dominican Order, which was declared to be in every country exclusively responsible to the Holy See. A generation later, the Franciscans were associated with the Dominicans in this control; but the Black Friars never ceased to be the leading spirits of the campaign inaugurated by their founder.

England was not a soil in which the exotic Inquisition could flourish. The Interdict had not long been removed, and the Fair of Lincoln was but four years passed, when the first Dominicans found their way to this country in 1221. As a matter of course they betook themselves at once to the universities. They had powerful backers, and soon acquired houses and land. Their influence grew rapidly, and,

if it had been possible to imitate at Oxford and London what was done at Toulouse and Paris, under Louis the Saint and his mother Blanche of Castile, there were doubtless fanatics enough in England to be ready participants in the Dominican crusade. But it was not possible. Apart from the absolute bar which English independence of character would have offered to the creation of a new tribunal at the instance of a foreign potentate,—in spite of the fact that England was for her own purposes a tributary of Rome,—still the long succession of wars with France, the increasing jealousy of papal interference, and perhaps even the political sympathy evoked by the religious tyranny in Languedoc (our next neighbour in Gascony and Guienne) would have sufficed to prevent it.

We may assume that Dominic saw the impossibility as clearly as anyone. If he gave a special mandate to his English missionaries, as is likely enough, he would remind them that they were not to expect any help from the arm of the Inquisition, and that, for the present at least, no rack or funeral pyre could aid them in their quest of souls. He would bid them gain a footing amongst the clerks and students of the ancient universities, and direct their subtlety against the perilous inroads on the faith which had already been made by the Schoolmen. He would tell them to watch for the beginnings of relapse, to train themselves for the contest which was certain to be thrust upon them, and to keep the sword of their dialectic sharp and keen. They might find at Oxford or at Cambridge a new

Abelard, a stiff-necked scholar, puffed up with pride, teaching the new-fangled learning, distilling the poison of profane knowledge and unchastened reason, spreading around him the miasma of heresy and rebellion. Let them scent such a man, mark him, track him down, wrestle with him for his own soul and the souls of his unhappy victims—and then? Well, the English were an obstinate race. The civil authorities might give them no aid against the most pestilent of heretics; even the bishops might remain indifferent to their faithful expostulations. It was for his devoted Preachers to meet such difficulties with sublimer faith, with subtler intellect, with blades from the armoury of their enemy; and the time might yet come, even in rebellious England, when the stern but loving discipline of Holy Church might contribute to the greater glory of God by its *autos-da-fe*.

So may we imagine this seer and zealot of the still undivided Church to have commissioned his English delegates, as he placed in their hands a letter of recommendation from Blanche of Castile to Isabel de Balbec, the pious wife of Robert de Vere, who was to give them the nest-egg of their future possessions both at Oxford and at Cambridge.

At any rate this was the policy which the English Dominicans more or less consciously pursued. They bided their time, and whenever a chance presented itself they were ardent defenders of the Roman tradition and the papal authority. It does not appear that their morals were ever so far relaxed as those of the Franciscans; and intellectually they remained

more in harmony with and loyal to their superiors on the continent than the generality of the Orders in England. Whilst it is not unusual to find men of independent thought amongst the friars in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, like the Franciscan Roger Bacon (whose brother Robert was a staunch Dominican) and the Carmelite John Baconsthorpe, we scarcely ever come across a Preaching Friar who was not imbued with the narrow and aggressive spirit of St. Dominic against the merest indication of heresy.

Wyclif may have had friends and sympathisers in every Order. He was certainly at one time on fairly good terms with many of the Franciscan Friars. But no tolerance for his bolder views and innovations could be expected from the Dominican obscurants. They were amongst the first to detect his heresy, to denounce him at home and at Rome, to reproach the bishops for their indifference to his false teaching, and to produce against him that keen-edged sword which their founder had entrusted to them. We may anticipate our story so far as to quote from a list of the more celebrated members of the Order (given by Stevens from the papers of Anthony à Wood, who was indebted to Bishop Bale) the names of certain Dominicans who particularly signalised themselves by their zeal in refuting the errors of Lollardy. Thus we read of William Jordan (1370) "who with much boldness excelled among the Oxford masters, carrying himself with much boasting ostentation, and like another Ismael (so says Bale) opposed all men, and was opposed by all. He writ pieces against Wickliff's positions";—Roger Dimock

(1390), "a man of singular judgment, not only in philosophical matters . . . but also in the mysteries of divinity which relate to faith. He spent many years at Oxford with reputation ; amongst which that was most remarkable in which he was appointed by the vote of the universities the invincible champion to conquer Wickliff's followers";—and Robert Humbleton, "who by several writings declared himself a professed enemy to Wickliff and his followers."

Humbleton was present as a bachelor of theology at the proceedings taken against Wyclif in 1382—and the various Orders were of course largely represented at all such proceedings. Kynyngham, a Carmelite Friar, was specially selected to argue against Wyclif, long before the Church authorities had begun to move. Of the twelve theologians who condemned Wyclif in 1381, at the instigation of Courtenay, six were friars and two were monks.

This is by the way ; but note how the long arm of the astute Dominic had reached through the centuries and across the northern seas, adapting means to surroundings, and preparing the very instrument which would be necessary to crush (if anything could crush) the English revolt against the Papacy. Let us recognise how marvellous a service—albeit transitory and incomplete—was rendered to the cause which had enlisted his transcendent abilities by the Inquisitor-General of France and Spain. In his native country, in Languedoc and the valleys of the Alps, by torture, death, and domestic crusade, he went far towards annihilating the nascent opposition

to Rome, and helped to weld a France which to this day, in spite of republican institutions and widespread rationalism, is not so much the eldest son as the most jealous guardian of the Roman Church. And in England, though his Inquisition was powerless, and he had to wait nearly two hundred years for the attainment of his ambition, it was still St. Dominic and his Preaching Friars who turned the blade of Wyclif's logic, diverted the full flood of Lollardy until it was lost for a century in the sands, instigated a persecution almost as bitter as that which had been directed against the Waldenses, and for a time baulked and defeated the intellectual movement in the English Church.

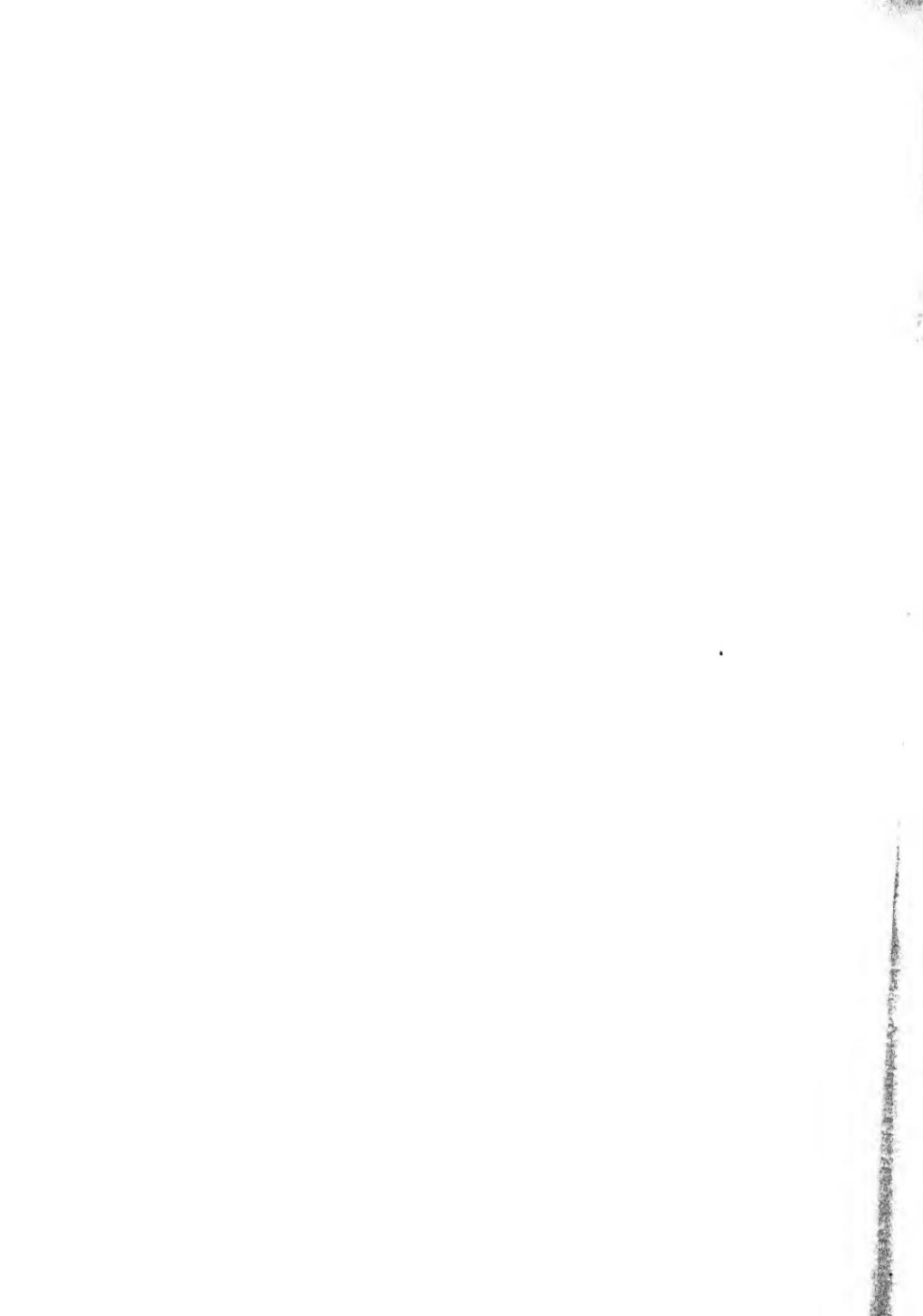
The coming of the Franciscan (Grey) Friars, or Friars Minor, to Oxford took place in the year 1224. Their arrival in England was only a few years later than that of the Dominicans, as the institution of their Order was a few years subsequent to the establishment of the Preaching Friars. The quaint story of Ingeworth and Henry of Devon, as recorded in Stevens's transcript from the papers of Anthony à Wood, is well worth telling afresh.

These two forerunners of a famous brotherhood, "being not far from Oxford, and gone out of the way as not knowing the country," turned off to a grange or farm-house of the Benedictines of Abingdon, six miles from Oxford, because night was drawing on and the floods were out. Stevens suggests that the precise locality may have been Baldon, or Culham, for at both places the Abbey of Abingdon had property. "The friars came to it just at



FRANCISCAN (GREY) FRIAR.

(FROM MIGNE'S "ENCYCLOPÉDIE.")



nightfall ; and, knocking gently at the door, humbly begged for God's sake to be admitted, otherwise they should perish through hunger and cold. It was the porter to whom they made their request, who, guessing these two friars by their patched habits, the meanness of their aspect, and their broken language, to be some mimics, or disguised persons, carried the message to the prior, who was not displeased with it. He, hastening to the door with the sacrist, the cellarer, and two younger monks, freely invited them in, expecting to be entertained with some sleight of hand or diverting pastime. But the friars, with a composed and sedate countenance, affirming that they were mistaken, that they were no such vile men, but that they had chosen an apostolical course of life to serve God, the Benedictines, displeased to be so defrauded of their expected diversion, turned out the friars, after misusing, kicking and buffeting them." So they went out into the cold and rain again ; but one of the young monks took pity on them, and smuggled them into the hayloft. And afterwards, in a dream, he beheld Christ making inquisition into the conduct of the wicked Benedictines, and condemning them, after their repudiation by St. Benedict as subverters of his rule, to be hanged on a convenient elm tree.

It is added that Ingeworth and Henry of Devon proceeded next morning to Oxford, and went to the house of the Dominicans in the Jewry, where they were entertained for eight days. Evidently the story is of Franciscan origin, and it bears witness not only to the opinions entertained of Benedictine

laxity by the new devotees, but also to the harmonious relations existing at the time between the followers of Dominic and those of Francis of Assisi.

It need hardly be said that the harmony and co-operation of the friars in matters of common interest was no sign of identity in their mandates, vows, or ultimate aims. Most of the brotherhoods originating in the thirteenth century seem to have owed their institution to the revival of religious fervour by the crusades or otherwise, and to a spirit of moral innovation due to the plethoric abuses of many Benedictine houses. It is not clear that any other Order had the subtlety of purpose which undoubtedly belonged to the Dominicans, though many of the Franciscans were evidently made of the same stuff, and were equally intellectual and highly-trained men. It is told of Francis—whose youth was dissolute and profligate—that when he elected to follow an ascetic life his father required him to make a formal renunciation of his inheritance, and that he thereupon stripped himself naked, in order that the symbol might be beyond dispute. And it is further stated that in the course of a few years he had as many as five thousand friars at his disposal, who had been moved by his example to similar acts of renunciation. In any case it is certain that the Dominicans and Franciscans were, and continued to be recruited by, picked men, socially and intellectually on a level with the men whom they would meet at Oxford and Cambridge. And of course they would not be long in England before the main body of their members were drawn from the uni-

versity students, although the general direction of the Orders came from Rome.

The corruption of the new Orders from their preliminary professions of poverty, simplicity of life, and singleness of purpose was sooner or later inevitable. The originative influence of St. Dominic in regard to his own Order has been insisted on above. He is not likely to have had any influence in establishing the other Orders which arose in the thirteenth century. Yet there doubtless was a common origin for them all; and it is not far to seek. The Benedictines were so widely spread, so wealthy, and so powerful in the social relations which they maintained with the laity, that if they had continued to bring a balance of advantage to the Church and its rulers there would have been no need for the institution of new Orders. But the balance of advantage had virtually disappeared. The general contempt into which so many worldly, idle, and vicious monks had fallen in every country could not fail to weaken the hold of religion on the popular mind. Innocent III. and his successors appear to have been convinced that a crusade in Christendom was quite as necessary as a crusade against the avowed infidels, and that the most effective weapons for the new crusaders would be those of apostolic poverty and fervour. Nor was it only, or even mainly, as a corrective against the corruption of the monks that the Mendicant Friars were sent forth. Their object was also to supply the defects of the secular clergy, whose lack of energy, and often of practical piety, was gravely reflected on by their contemporaries.

The enthusiasm and success of the early friars have been compared with those of the English Methodists in the days of Wesley and Whitfield. They would be fresh in the memory of the nation when John Wyclif, a century and a half later, sent out his own Poor Priests to emulate their spirit and to achieve a very similar success. The friars of the thirteenth century found a church in every street and field; they carried with them not only the evidences of their personal poverty, but the fullest sacerdotal authority, and the very altars and sacraments of religion. In the course of a generation we find Matthew of Paris complaining that the churches were deserted, and that the people would confess to none but friars. It is not to be wondered at that the secular clergy, the hierarchy, and even the universities remonstrated against the privileges and favours which Rome continued to shower upon her new missionaries.

The doctrine of poverty was an essential part of the constitution of St. Francis. When the Franciscans began to hold houses and lands of their own, to live like Benedictine monks in their convents, and to relax their apostolical fervour as well as their evangelical poverty, they ceased to fulfil the purposes for which they were founded. Even the brightest ornaments of the Order, such as Bishop Grosteste (who left them his library), Adam Marsh, Roger Bacon, the "Irrefragable" Alexander Hales, the learned and influential Haymo, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham, were anything rather than the mendicant missionaries whom St. Francis had pictured

in his mind. Many of the friars nevertheless adhered to the original rule, taking the name of Spirituals or Observants. The dispute between the two sections of the Order soon waxed warm, and the popes of the thirteenth century had much difficulty in holding the balance between them. It was declared from Rome that whilst the Order were debarred from actual ownership, they were entitled to the usufruct of their acquisitions, the property itself being vested in the Supreme Pontiff. Pope Nicholas III. formulated a bull to this effect. The conscience of the Spirituals was not satisfied by this partial vindication, and the principle involved appeared to them so important that it became almost a new basis of religious faith. Christ and his disciples, they maintained, were voluntarily poor; the possession of wealth was incompatible with apostolic Christianity; poverty was an indispensable note of a true Church. As late as 1322 a general assembly of the Franciscans at Perugia, representing the branches of the Order in every country, adopted the doctrine of evangelical poverty in its fullest sense.

This was logical; but equally logical was the alarm of the Pope and his supporters. For the natural and necessary development of one of the chief factors of pure Christianity was seen to be in direct conflict with the teaching and practice of the Papacy. If the Spiritual Franciscans were right, the Pope, the superior clergy, the monks, the Dominicans themselves, were all unapostolic, not to say anti-Christian. Avignon fulminated at once against these new heretics, and John XXII. did not hesitate

to cut out of the decretals the bull which Nicholas III. had promulgated at Rome. The Order as a whole gave way; but many an honest friar and clerk muttered in advance his "*e pur si muove.*"

This was a turning-point of the early Reformation. If it had been humanly possible to crush the Papacy in the fourteenth century, or even to liberate the national Churches from papal control or interference, the task would have been accomplished. For the spiritual blow delivered by the Franciscans in 1322 was as staggering in its way as the political blow administered by Philip of France less than twenty years before. And in fact, both in the political and in the spiritual order, the work of those twenty years was substantially effectual. It was in the direct line of thought and action from Avignon and Perugia onwards, through the Schoolmen and the Lollards, through Marsiglio of the University of Paris and Wyclif of the University of Oxford, that the statesmen and clerics of the sixteenth century derived their power to strike and to conquer. With the Spiritual Franciscans Wyclif never ceased to be in full sympathy; but when he came to maturity they were comparatively few and insignificant.

Such, then, were the monks and the friars with whom Wyclif was brought into contact and conflict in the fourteenth century—distinct from each other and from the national Church, by no means always in harmony, yet all in a large measure subordinate to a foreign authority, and all virtually combined in common defence of their positions against the innovating spirit of the early Reformers.



## CHAPTER IV.

### WYCLIF AND THE SCHOOLMEN.



E have already encountered, amongst the pioneers of religious reform in England, members of two mutually supporting bodies, advancing in parallel directions towards a common object. On the one hand we see the men of action, monarchs and statesmen, with their allies and instruments, who in the temporal domain successively resisted and attacked the assumptions of the Roman Church; and on the other hand there were the men of thought, of accurate logic and awakened conscience, who in the spiritual domain required that Christian practice should conform to the root-principles of Christianity, and refused to accept the papal superstructure as of equal authority with the foundation which it hid from sight.

One of the most interesting facts in connection with the life of John Wyclif, which has contributed as much as anything else to fix him in the popular imagination, and to place him permanently on the roll of English heroes, is that he elected to play the part of a politician as well as of a theologian, and that, being a priest and a Schoolman, he joined hands with the statesmen of his age, in order to secure what could not be obtained without their aid. No institution was ever reformed in the absence of co-operation from within; and reformers within the Church have always commanded a lively sympathy in England. Wyclif was the first conspicuous English clergyman who combined his aspirations for reform with a frank admission of the right (and corresponding duty) of laymen to interpose in matters of faith and discipline. We shall hereafter be in a position to judge as to the nature of his relations with King and Parliament, with princes and with peasants. It was through these relations that he became a popular Englishman, and that his name has stood out for five centuries like a patch of warm colour from the neutral tints of the later Middle Ages.

Now it is above all things important to remember that Wyclif took this significant stand as the direct heir of the Schoolmen—as a Schoolman himself, interpreting and giving effect to their views, wedging action to thought, not only by his individual energy and initiative, but in obedience to national character and scholastic training. Some injustice has been done to the Schoolmen by constantly speaking of them as though they were men of disquisition only,

chop-logics in a narrow groove, industrious tillers of a barren soil. This has at any rate been the popular notion of their quality, and the vast majority of readers have been led to dismiss them from their minds with a shudder at their repellent dryness and ineffective ingenuity. It is only since yesterday that something like justice has been done to their intellectual and theological position, to their attitude as men of action and not merely as writers, and especially to their character as leaders in religious reform. Hallam remarks that the discovery of truth by means of scholastic discussions "was rendered hopeless by two insurmountable obstacles, the authority of Aristotle and that of the Church." The great historian, from whose judgments so few of his successors are competent to dissent, regarded the Schoolmen as writers only. He does not mention Marsiglio, nor deal with Wyclif as a Schoolman. He expresses disappointment with what he had read of Ockham; but he had not directed his attention to the political association of Marsiglio, Ockham, and Michael of Cesena with Ludwig of Bavaria, nor to that of Wyclif with the English court. Indeed it is only in the present generation that full light has been cast on the innovating and revolutionary spirit of the later Schoolmen. We must be content to sacrifice the representative character of the story of angels dancing on the point of a needle in return for the more just appreciation of scholastic aims and methods which we owe to modern German and English research.

Enough, perhaps, has been said of the political

usurpation of Rome, and of the conflict excited by it up to the beginning of the fourteenth century; but it will be interesting to ascertain the exact position of Wyclif in the intellectual revolt against the obscurantism of the mediæval Church. It would be useless to ask ourselves when and where this revolt actually began. The mind and the heart of man appear to have acted on virtually identical principles in all ages, and no doubt the first religious Reformers were contemporaneous with the first obscurers of truth and usurpers of authority. But from the eleventh century, to take no earlier date, the ever extending claims of the Papacy are associated with the protests of active and inquiring minds. It is clear that the worst errors of Rome corresponded in time with the feudal supremacies in the States, as their refutation corresponded with the establishment of schools and universities.

The schools of Charles the Great, Alfred, and Edward the Confessor were largely developed and frequented under Norman rule. They were, to begin with, under the patronage of the monarchs rather than of the Church; they taught not only theology but also law and medicine, as well as the *trivium* and *quadrivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric; music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy); and they constituted at once a nursery and a refuge of minds which sought intellectual and moral freedom. Already in the twelfth century we find Oxford attracting her three thousand students, and Paris divided into her four nations of France, Picardy, Normandy, and England; whilst in the next century contem-

porary writers number the scholars of Oxford, Paris, and Bologna by tens of thousands. Close in their wake came the foundations of Padua, Naples, Toulouse, Montpelier, Cambridge, Salamanca, and Prague.

In this fertile soil were sown the seeds of independence, inquiry, and moral courage. Here learning grew, and the revolt against the suppression of truth was prepared. The path which Wyclif was to tread had been worn by Abelard of Paris and his pupil Arnold of Brescia, by John of Salisbury, Pierre Dubois, and Berengar; by Bishop Grosteste, Bracton, Archbishop Bradwardine, and Ockham of Oxford; by Marsiglio of Padua and Paris, Fitzralph of Oxford, Lupold of Bebenburg, and many others who owed their training and hardihood to the schools.

Each particular age has its available and appropriate refuges for the thought of man, in its reaction and revolt against spiritual tyranny; yet, age for age, the refuge is substantially the same in each. The human mind which refuses to dwell with the moles and bats must grope and struggle for the light by such avenues as may be open to it. Before the period of the general Renascence of liberal studies there were few avenues, and those narrow and difficult, which led to any sort of illumination save that which shone from the chair of St. Peter. The seven sciences supposed to be included in the *trivium* and *quadrivium*—a fifth- or sixth-century classification—were little better than titles for the students in the ecclesiastical schools. Ingulfus, Abbot of Croyland in the eleventh century, a Westminster and

Oxford man by his own account, was able to study Aristotle and the first two books of Tully's rhetoric, evidently a giddy height of profane knowledge for the days in which he lived. The Latin poets as known to the zealous Alcuin were forbidden to his pupils, and exceedingly little is heard of them in the succeeding centuries. Law meant the decretals of the popes, with a subsequent tinge of Justinian. Medicine was but a smattering of empirical dogmas and rules, fallacious when not directly injurious and homicidal. Of liberal, still less of literary studies, in the worthier sense of the terms, we have barely a trace before the fourteenth century; and even then they were so rare that we are astonished when a man of high culture like Chaucer reveals his knowledge of the contemporary Italian poets, or when a Franciscan friar like Roger Bacon displays what looks like a genuine spirit of exact scientific inquiry. So long as for the majority of eager students the science of astronomy culminated in the arrangement of the calendar, and the science of music in a cathedral chant, whilst Virgil smelt of magic and Ovid was under a jealous ban, the learning of scholars could but bring them back to the point from which they had started, often with an eager craving for relief—to the religious dogma of their day.

Hence the men of intellectual energy, who in other ages might have been effective as philosophical inquirers, were condemned to feed upon the mere husks of knowledge, to beat the air and walk the vicious circle, mumbling inconclusive dialogues on universal ideas, on nominalism and realism, on grace

and predestination and free-will, bound down meanwhile to the orthodox theology of Rome, with no better alternative and outlet than the logic and metaphysics of Aristotle, the comments of Averroes, and the subtleties of the Angelic Doctor. Even these were dangerous guides in the opinion of many. Aquinas held his ground, but Aristotle and Averroes were condemned by the same authority which tabooed the civil law.

Such were the studies of the Schoolmen, both of those who strongly maintained the supremacy of Rome in matters of faith and also of those who denied it. There was not much intellectual breadth in this scholastic arena, but it was quite broad enough to admit the bandying to and fro of charges of heresy. In days when authority demanded absolute conformity, the mere spirit of inquiry and research was sufficient to lay a man open to suspicion and condemnation. The substance of the average scholastic disquisitions was so meagre and trivial that it must have been exceedingly difficult even for an Inquisitor to discover the heretical tendencies of any particular discourse; and possibly for that very reason the accusation was frequently brought.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that there was no value in the method by which these subjects were discussed. It was in fact the new dialectic itself which attracted, and to some extent satisfied the frequenters of the schools; and certainly it was an instrument of mental discipline which, in the absence of a better, served to train the

western mind to think, discriminate, and judge. If it was for the time applied to mere phantoms of theology and philosophy, and produced vacant chaff in place of grain, still the training had been given, and the instrument remained bright and keen for future use.

The codification of the canon law, which within certain limits confirmed the authority of the Church whilst it seemed to open up a new field of intellectual activity, had a further and unforeseen effect in strengthening the opposition to papal supremacy. The sentences of the Fathers, the canons and decretals of the Popes, were compiled and re-issued many times in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The decretals were essentially aggressive against the civil power, for they included various decrees of deposition and excommunication of monarchs, and repeated declarations of the right of the Pope to dispense subjects from their allegiance to their rulers. One effect of the publication of the canon law in this form was to add to the army of the clergy and the army of the monks (soon to be reinforced by the army of the friars) yet another army of lawyers, warmly devoted to the interests of the Church.

It is remarkable that just at this time the study of the Pandects, Code, and Institutes of Justinian—the system of Roman law compiled and maintained in Byzantium—was revived after long neglect. Was it a mere coincidence? Or may it not be that the magistrates and lawyers, the teachers and students in the schools, reverted to Justinian out of sheer necessity for relief from the narrow absolutism of the

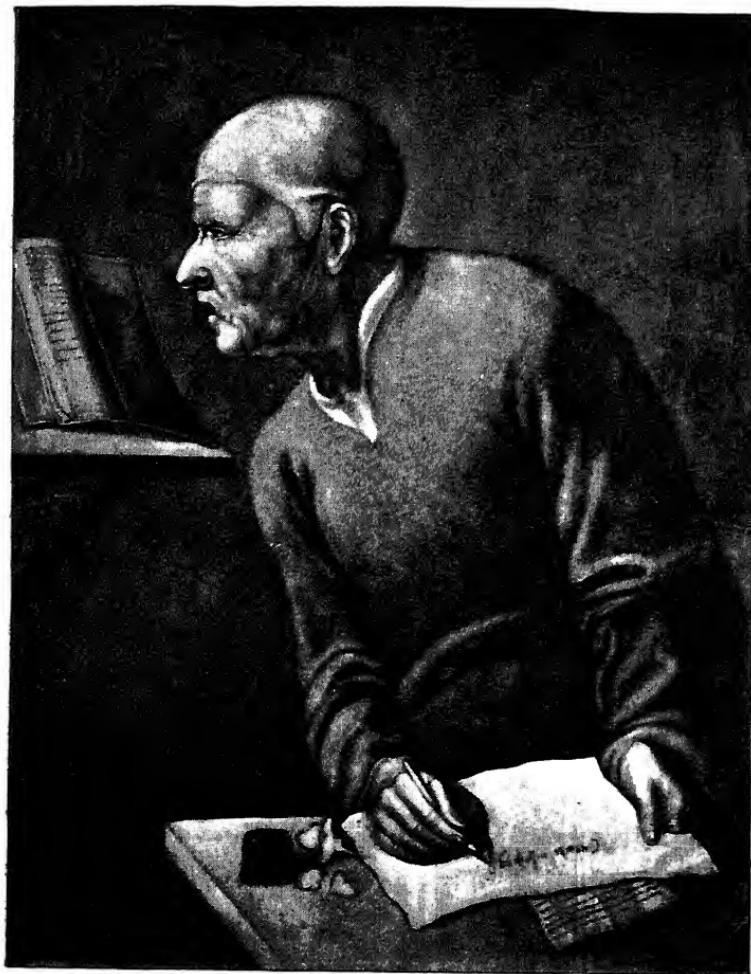
canon law—and that the Church, without venturing or attempting to confine legal studies to her own decretals, still looked with suspicion on every other kind of law? Indeed this is no mere supposition; the study of civil law was long forbidden in the University of Paris, and even at Oxford the clerical authorities resisted it when it was introduced by Vacarius from Bologna in the reign of Stephen. However it may have been with the civil law, it is certain that the common law of England and the national customs and precedents of other countries were held up as correctives of the *ex cathedra* deliv-erances of the Papacy, and that their study was encouraged by perspicacious men in order to counteract the teachings of Rome in the interests of the State. The jurisprudents of Paris, as distinct from the canonists, were very serviceable to Philip the Fair in his quarrel with Boniface; and so it was with the independent lawyers in other countries. The very infatuation of the Roman usurpers helped to prepare their own defeat.

For our present purpose, however, the main thing is to observe that the most liberal-minded clerics of the eleventh and three following centuries, regulars as well as seculars, who were found principally in the schools and universities, take their place in the ranks of the Schoolmen, and link hand to hand across the later Middle Ages. They carry us forward from Roscelin, the leader of the Nominalists, through Anselm, Abelard, Peter Lombard, Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Michael of Cesena and other Franciscans, Marsiglio, Bradwardine, and William of Ockham, to

John Wyclif—who in his turn joins hands with John Huss and Jerome of Prague, from whom the torch was passed onward to the German and English Reformers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

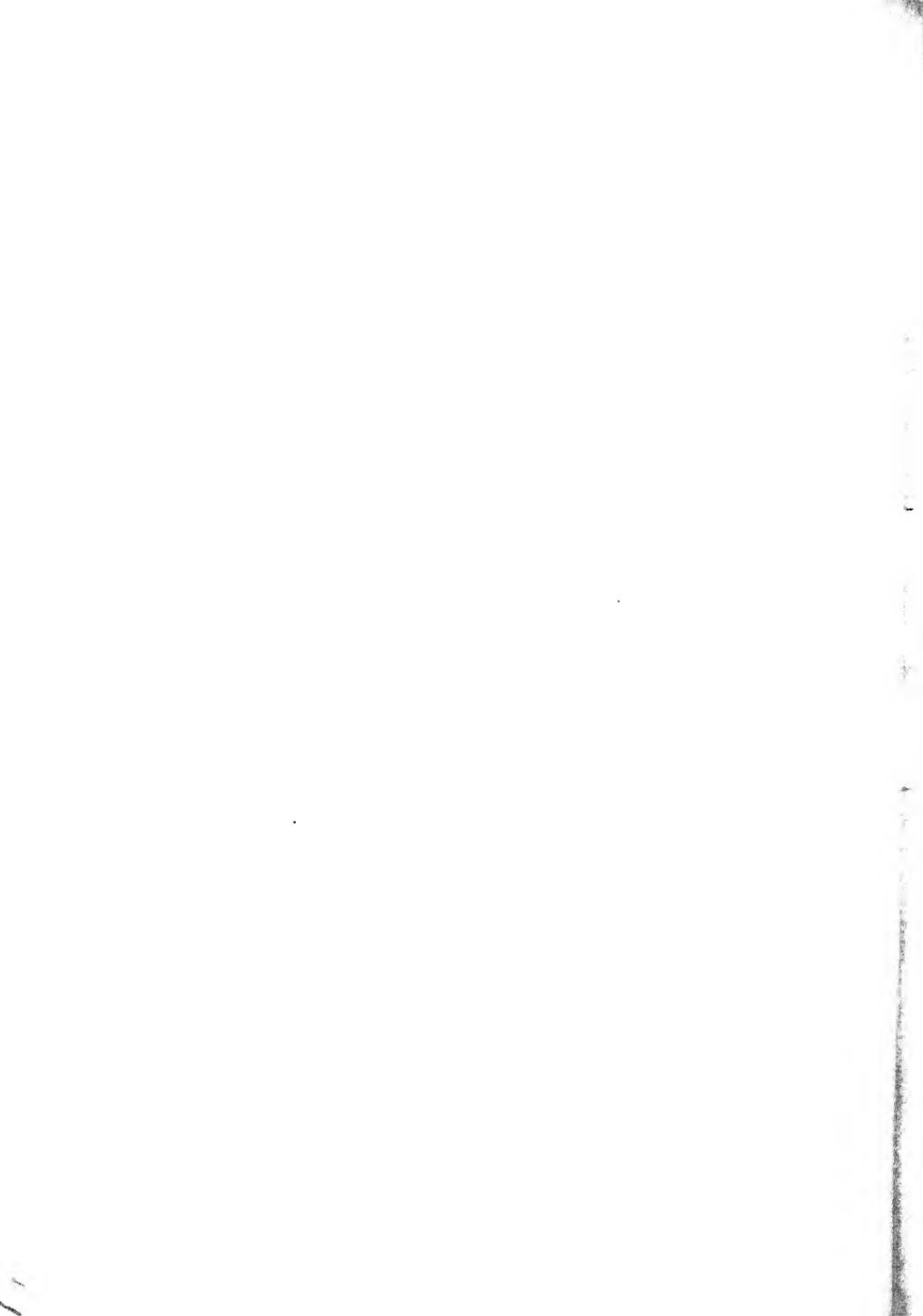
It has already been said that Wyclif was a Schoolman by intellectual descent and training. At Oxford he imbibed the spirit and ideas of Bradwardine and Ockham, who were both fellows of Merton when he was studying for his degrees, and by whose writings, if not by their personal teaching, he must have largely profited. Bradwardine, who became Archbishop of Canterbury, and died of the plague in 1349, on the morrow of his admission to the temporalities of that province, was anything but a mere Schoolman, being not only a popular teacher at the university, but also a king's chaplain and a travelled man. He wrote scientific treatises on *Proportion*, on *The Quadrature of the Circle*, on *Speculative Arithmetic*, and *Speculative Geometry*, and on *The Art of Memory*. He collected his lectures (in Latin) under the title of *The Cause of God against Pelagius, and concerning Causes in General*, and dedicated the book to his friends at Merton.

Bradwardine has been claimed as one of the direct forerunners of the Calvinists, and he certainly frowned on the ideas of free-will, the merit of good deeds, the winning of grace by congruity, and so forth. "In the schools of the philosophers," he writes, "we rarely heard a word said concerning grace, but we were continually told that we were the masters of our own free actions, and that it was in our power to do well or ill." The "Profound Doctor"



JOHN DUNS SCOTUS—"DOCTOR SUBTILIS."

BY J. FABER, FROM THE OXFORD PORTRAIT.



taught that human nature, on the other hand, is impotent for good, that the best deeds of men are unmeritorious, that everything worthy comes of the free grace and with the absolute foreknowledge of God. His teaching commended itself not a little to the men of his day, and Wyclif was deeply imbued with it. Chaucer re-echoes his fame, for he makes the Nun's Priest confess, on this capital distinction between predestination and free-will,

“I ne cannot boult it to the bran,  
As can the holy doctor, saint Austyn,  
Or Boëce, or the bishop Bradwardyn.”

There is clearly a sense in which Bradwardine was a forerunner of the Calvinists, or rather of the earlier English predestinarians. A familiar passage in *Paradise Lost* describes the occupations of the fallen angels:

“Others apart sat on a hill retired,  
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high  
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,  
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.”

Of course Milton need not have been indebted to Bradwardine for any of his ideas, and yet it is possible enough that he had sat at the feet of the Schoolman. Sir Henry Savile printed the treatise against Pelagianism early in the seventeenth century, and the omnivorous student was not at all unlikely to have seen this book.

William of Ockham died in 1357, the year in which Wyclif, according to some accounts, was made

a fellow of Merton, though there is reason to doubt the last-mentioned statement. Ockham was a Franciscan friar, and some of the ablest men of the Order in the fourteenth century were his professed followers. He had sat under Duns Scotus, who had also been a fellow of Merton and a Franciscan ; but in several respects the views of master and pupil were in sharp contrast. Duns was a Realist, a "Scotist," a believer in the immaculate conception of the Virgin, a defender of the current orthodoxy of Rome. Ockham was a Nominalist, a champion of the Fraticelli, not to say a Fraticello himself, who wrote a cogent *Defence of Poverty*. He opposed the extreme political claims of the Papacy, denied the final authority of the decretal or canon law, and held that logic was essentially distinct from and independent of theology—which, according to his enemies, was the same thing as to declare it of superior authority. Though he was far less dogmatically assertive in regard to the spiritual assumptions of Rome than some of his friends, yet his personal courage, and the sacrifices which he made for his belief, were unquestionable ; and he was finally excommunicated. He went so far as to denounce John XXII. as a heretic ; and, in the quarrel between that Pope and Ludwig of Bavaria, he ranged himself on the side of the Emperor, and of the Antipope Nicolas.

Ockham, like many English scholars of his day, took advantage of the privilege accorded to those who wished to study at the University of Paris. Whilst there, he formed a close friendship with

Marsiglio of Padua (called also Mainardini, and Menandrinus), an ardent sympathiser with the Emperor Ludwig, and a distinct progenitor of Wyclif in his ideas of political government. Mr. R. L. Poole has clearly summarised the arguments of Marsiglio in his *Wycliffe and Movements for Reform*, a volume which must be consulted by any reader who wishes to trace in detail the descent of ideas, and especially of political ideas, through Marsiglio and Ockham to Wyclif.\* Marsiglio worked out his conception of the harmony which should exist between the civil and the spiritual dominion in his *Defensor Pacis*, produced whilst he was living at Paris in 1324, which was probably a few years after the date of Wyclif's birth. This work, with the *Dialogus* and *De Ecclesiastica et Politica Potestate* of Ockham, was widely read by his contemporaries and successors; and the literature to which these works belong did much to create or reconstruct the model on which our actual theories of Church and State have been formed.

No doubt for the original ideas we should have to go back at least as far as the political philosophers of Greece and Rome, to whom Marsiglio must have been more or less directly indebted for them. Prescience and divination alone could scarcely have enabled a Schoolman to evolve from surrounding chaos the main political principles of the eighteenth century; but, whether this could have been or not, the more salient of these principles had been stated

\* See also *John Wyclif and his English Precursors*, by Prof. G. V. Lechler; Lorimer's translation.

many centuries before, and only needed to be revived. The mere revival is infinitely to the credit of the Italian and English scholastic philosophers. To re-establish such ideas under such conditions and circumstances was to display all the character and effective force of originality. There is indeed a conceivable suggestion that the Moors of Spain, who gave to Europe from Arabic sources more than one work of Greek philosophy and science, had furnished Marsiglio in the same manner with the elements of his constitutional treatise.

The central and most striking of Marsiglio's political ideas—from which, indeed, his other political ideas are seen to radiate—is that of the sovereignty of the people. The people, he maintains, must be ultimate lawgiver and ultimate judge; the State must have a supreme executive, selected and authorised by itself. “The king's power is limited in every possible direction. He has the eye of the people or its representatives on all his actions. He may be restrained or even deposed if he overpass his prescribed bounds; and, even though his conduct be not amenable to the letter of the law, he is still subject to the final judgment of the national will. On no side is there any room for despotism; in no point is he absolute.”\* And Ockham, in the third part of his *Dialogus*, goes over the same ground and arrives at the same conclusions. It is indeed arguable whether Marsiglio or Ockham was the more original writer of the two. Pope Clement, in a bull condemning the writings of Marsiglio, declared them to

\* R. L. Poole, as above, p. 31.

have been derived from Ockham; and, so far as religious and merely anti-papal views are concerned, this may well have been the case.

The evolution of these ideas in the age of the Schoolmen, where evolution can be recognised before the time of Marsiglio, was a gradual and tardy process, limited for the most part to the antagonism between Rome and the secular governments, or exhibiting little more than a variety of paraphrases from Aristotle, Albertus Magnus, and Aquinas. Pierre Dubois and John of Paris had begun to emphasise the distinctions between the authority of the Church and that of the State. This was before the time of the Emperor Ludwig; and it was Ludwig's vigorous conflict with Rome, during the "Babylonian Captivity" at Avignon, which set the seal of actuality on what had hitherto been a somewhat abstract disquisition. Several of the earlier Schoolmen had provided arguments against the encroachments of the Papacy; it was for Marsiglio and Ockham to erect an independent system without exclusive reference to the papal claims.

Lupold von Bebenburg, who wrote the first theoretical work on German jurisprudence, went a step further. Having formulated the rights of the Emperor, he maintains that even the homage and submissions of emperors to popes cannot wholly commit the subordinate princes and the people. As a tributary prince is permitted, when his overlord chooses to submit himself to another overlord, to refuse the new vassalage for his own part, so, if a vassal of a church-vassal declines to become a

church-vassal himself, he cannot be compelled thereto.

In the ecclesiastical domain we find the same ideas taken henceforth as the true basis of Church government. The Church is not the priestly order and hierarchy alone, but the whole body of Christians. The priests have their functions, but outside those functions they are members of the general community—subject to the State in their secular relations and to the Church in their spiritual relations. Marsiglio found no warrant for a hierarchy in the New Testament, nor for a human arbiter of orthodoxy, nor for any temporal visitation of pains and penalties on the ground of errors in opinion. In brief the Christian priesthood ought to be in plain truth a Christian ministry, serving and not enslaving the Church.

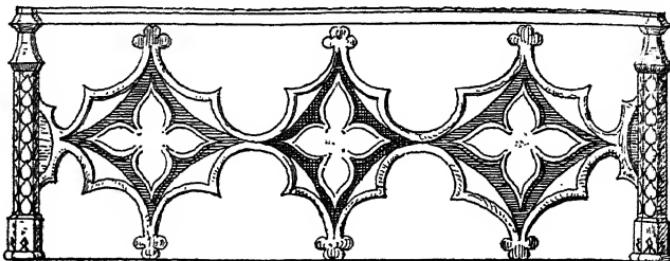
Evidently Marsiglio was a fourteenth-century protestant of the most uncompromising order. It may be supposed that he went too far for his friend Ockham, and too far for Wyclif—at any rate in Wyclif's earlier and more moderate phases. No doubt this must always be a matter of opinion; but it will scarcely be denied that if the Archbishops Sudbury and Courtenay had resisted the pressure brought to bear upon them by the monks and friars, and treated Wyclif with judicious coolness and patience, he might have stopped short of some of his later paradoxes and logical extremes. Wyclif, who had secured the confidence of his Oxford friends not only by his saintly life but also as a man of sense and an able administrator, was in many respects natu-

rally predisposed to compromise. Is it not reasonable to suppose that the Oxford scholar with his secular sympathies, the man of affairs living and working amongst his own countrymen, the patriot and man of letters,\* would have been well satisfied to advance step by step—so that the advance was indisputable,—leading and not outrunning the spirit of his times?

An English clergyman before everything else, John Wyclif inherited the ideas of Marsiglio and Ockham without claiming the whole of his inheritance. Deeply sympathetic for his unfortunate fellow-countrymen, as modest and simple in spirit as he was intellectually eager and ambitious, he aimed at being an orderly, a progressive, and yet an effectual Reformer. It was only after the defiance and exasperation of his enemies that he was forced into the attitude of an open heretic.

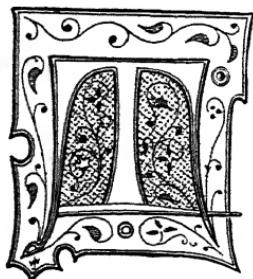
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\* Every Schoolman who made his mark must have studied the mathematics and science of his day. Wyclif, for instance, is pretty sure to have read the works of Roger Bacon, and to have cleared his mind by straining it through the scientific sieve. There is a sentence in the *De Civili Dominio* which showed him, as the late Prof. Thorold Rogers pointed out, to be well acquainted with the principle of the telescope:—"Sicut enim, juxta perspectivos, contingit per specula vel media diversarum dyafanitatum, quantumlibet parvum per quantamcunque magnam distanciam apparere ex elargacione anguli piramidis radialis: ita contingit fide videre ea quae sunt in principio mundi et die judicii ex fideli narracione fidelium sibi succedencium tam disparium fidei speculorum."



## CHAPTER V.

### WYCLIF'S EARLY DAYS.\*

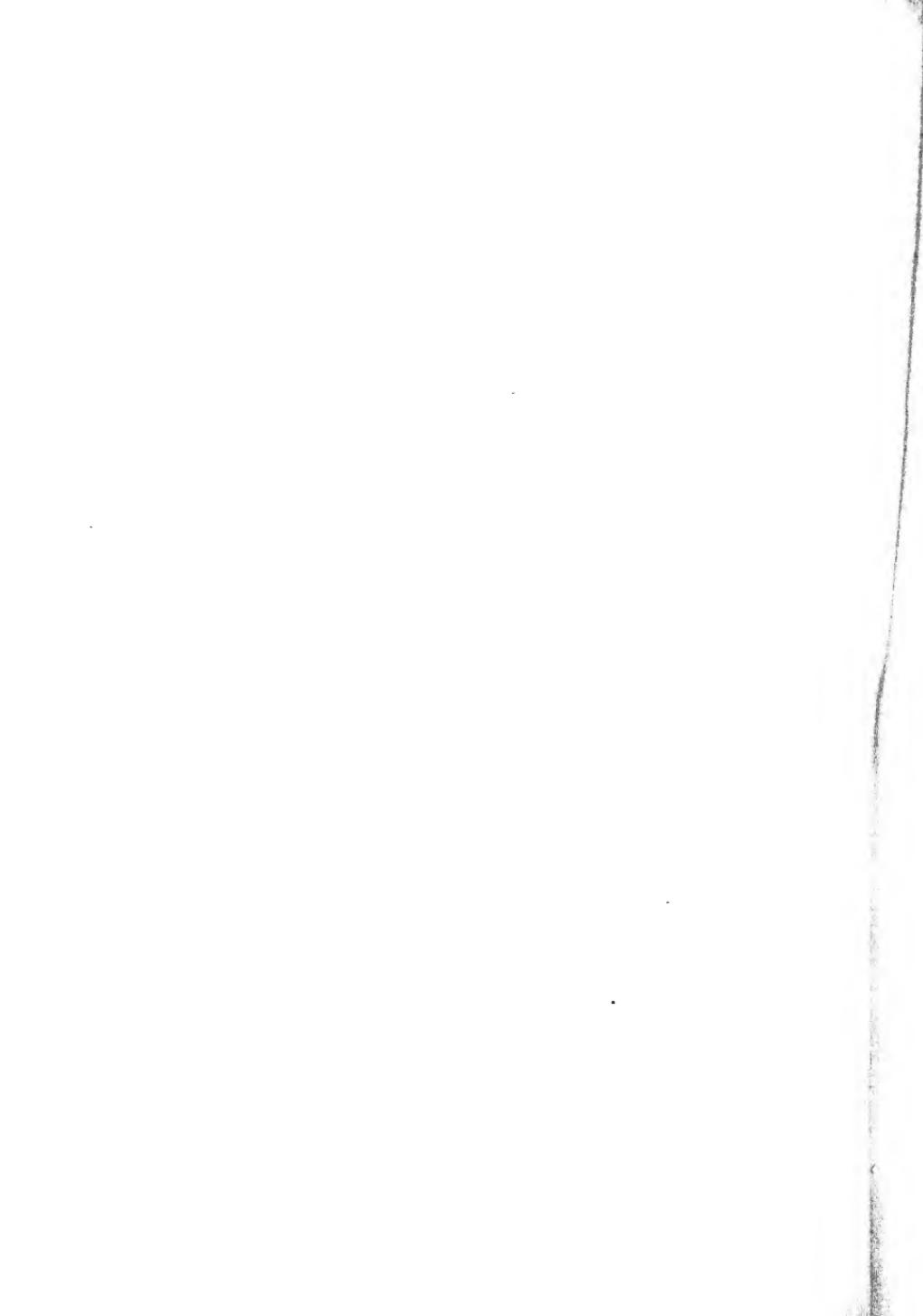


HE evidence in regard to Wyclif's birthplace is extremely meagre, and, such as it is, it must be taken in connection with the other and better ascertained facts of his biography. Sundry considerations tend to show that he was a member of the family of Wycliffes who lived on their own land at the village from which they took their name; but it so happens that John Wyclif, though he wrote a great deal, made no reference to his earliest home or to his parentage. Thomas Walsingham, a contemporary chronicler, says that he came from the North; but

\* The earlier portion of this chapter is identical in substance with two communications made by the author to the *Athenaeum* of March 12 and 26, 1892.



JOHN WYCLIF.  
*(Hondius fecit.)*



no one appears to have made a more definite statement until John Leland (who travelled and wrote in the reign of Henry VIII., upwards of two centuries after the event of which he speaks) mentions as a matter of hearsay that Wyclif was born at Spreswell, a good mile from Richmond in Yorkshire. In another place he says that the Reformer derived his origin from the village of Wycliffe, which is on the river Tees, some ten miles from Richmond.

These two statements of the antiquary have caused no slight perplexity amongst later writers. Even if they are consistent with each other, which is not quite clear, a double difficulty is created by the facts that there is no such place as Spreswell, actually or historically, within a mile or so of Richmond, and that the people of Wycliffe-on-Tees have for many generations piously laid claim to a Spreswell—or Speswell—of their own.

It was Whitaker who first suggested, in his *History of Richmondshire*, some ninety years ago, that Spreswell was only Leland's incorrect rendering of Ipswell or Hipswell—a village of this name still existing near Richmond. Dr. Shirley preferred to think that Leland had made no mistake, having written Ipreswell, which a copyist subsequently converted into Spreswell. Mr. F. D. Matthew and Mr. Poole, relying upon Stow's transcript from Leland's work, maintain that the copyist actually wrote Ipreswell, and that the S first makes its appearance in Hearne's printed copy of the *Itinerary*.

All this looks natural enough; but it does not make the birth of a Wycliffe of Wycliffe at Ipreswell

(assuming that Hipswell was once Ipreswell) any the more natural. If John Wyclif's birth at that place was remembered more than two centuries later, one would imagine that it must have been on account of a continued residence of his parents there, and not on the strength of a casual visit of his mother at the time of his birth. There is a difficulty in reconciling the Hipswell theory with the surmises which I shall presently venture to make in respect of the parentage of Wyclif—and mainly for the reason just stated. If Stow's transcript of Leland be regarded as finally establishing the form "Ipreswell," all that can be said is that we have one reason the fewer to hesitate over Leland's statement.

The statement is not very definite in itself, and it is introduced with a couple of words which almost imply that Leland did not attach great weight to it—not so much weight, for instance, as he attached to his independent statement about the village of Wycliffe. "They say"—these are his words—"that John Wyclif Haereticus was borne at Spreswel [Ipreswell], a poore village, a good myle from Richemont. If we accept the Ipreswell and the "good myle, there is still room for doubt in the "Haereticus and the introductory words. Leland merely repeats a rumour which he had not verified; and the fact of his stating it as a rumour implies that he thought it needed verification. His doubt may well have been the same as our own; it must have appeared strange to him that a Wycliffe of Wycliffe should have been born at Ipreswell; and, again, he would be quite alive to the possibility that any Wycliffe, or even

Whitcliffe, reputed to have lived at Ipreswell two hundred years ago, would tend to become identified with the famous "heretic" who gave Englishmen their open Bible.

The local tradition of a Spreswell close to the village of Wycliffe, which has been accepted by Dr. Vaughan, and also by Professor Lechler, presents various difficulties, and must be treated with particular caution, because one would be decidedly glad to believe it. According to this tradition, Spreswell was no mere figment of a name, and still less Ipreswell or Hipswell, but an actual hamlet or thorp, within the manor of the Wycliffes, and about half a mile from the present village of Wycliffe-on-Tees. Certain evidence in support of this contention has been adduced by the Rev. John Erskine, now Rector of Wycliffe. The evidence consists of :

1. A letter from William Chapman, 133 Church Street, Monkwearmouth (January 14, 1884), to the Rev. J. Erskine :

"I saw an account of the intended 'Restoration of Wycliffe Church, which stands close to Wycliffe Hall, the supposed birthplace of Wycliffe.' Leland, the historian, says Wycliffe was born at Spreswell, near Richmond. I enclose a copy of a statement made by my great-grandfather, John Chapman, who died 1849, aged eighty-one years, at Alwent Hall, Gainford."

2. The statement of John Chapman :

"Spreswell or Speswell stood half a mile west from Wycliffe, and on the same side and close to the River Tees. The Plough has passed over its site,

and all is quite level. There was a Chapel there, in which were married William Yarker and Penetent Johnson, and there [*sic*] son John Yarker has many times related the occurance to his Grandson, the Writer of this. The above coupel were the last married there, for the Chapel soon after fell down. Francis Wycliffe of Barnard Castle, the last of the Wycliffes in the Neighbourhood, said John the Reformer was born at the above Village.—John Chapman, Headlam, June 21st, 1839."

3. Mr. Erskine says :

"The tradition of Wycliffe having been born in this parish [Wycliffe-on-Tees] has existed for over two hundred years, while there is no trace of him or tradition at Hipswell . . . Might not Spreswell be a corruption of Thorpeswell? There is a manor house in the township of Thorpe, and there are ruins of a village close to it. I have also in my possession part of the mullion of a church window, and a piscina, which were found in the pulling down of an old wall on the property. The former might have been carried away from the east window of our church, but the latter could not, as it is in perfect preservation, while two in the church are broken close off by the wall. The property of Thorpe belonged to the Wilkinsons of Richmond, who purchased it from the Wycliffes . . . The man who gave me the piscina said that his great-grandfather spoke of the chapel at Thorpe, and that after the marriage of the two persons named in Mr. Chapman's letter the roof fell in . . . There was a village close to Thorpe Hall, as there are traces of

foundations of houses, and, as some believe, also of the village stocks."

Now, of course, this theory of a Speswell-on-Tees imposes on its advocates the necessity of explaining away Leland's "good myle from Richemont." Some have evolved an Old Richmond on the river bank, three or four miles below Wycliffe, and have interpreted the "good myle" in the sense of a Scot's "mile and a bit," where the bit is apt to be more than the mile. There is now on the same spot a village called Barforth, which, according to Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary*, was "formerly called Old Richmond"; and a place of this name appears in Carey's map of the North Riding of Yorkshire. The evidence is very recent, and—as "Richemont" was in its present position long before Leland's time—we should hardly be any better off if we were to accept it. Others say that the antiquary was well informed as to Spreswell, but ill informed as to the distance from Richmond; and with respect to this alternative it is only fair to remember that Leland or his informers made some curious mistakes in matters of locality and distance. There are at least two of these mistakes in the *Itinerary* within fifty lines of the passage which has given so much trouble to the biographers of Wyclif, from which it would seem that Leland had no very clear and precise picture of the Richmondshire country in his mind.

Without building anything upon the name of Spreswell—and it is as easy to conclude that the local tradition refers to Thorpeswell as that Leland's original was the otherwise undistinguished village of

Hipswell—there is evidence as to a group of houses close to the manor house where the Wycliffes lived, and nearer to it than the village of Wycliffe was. Nothing is more likely than that there should have been a little thorp and a chapel near the gates of the manor house other than the village and the church of Wycliffe. We know, in fact, that there was a Thorp as early as the thirteenth century which formed part of the Wycliffe estate; and if there was no chapel at that early date one would almost certainly have been built in the sixteenth century. The family remained staunchly Romanist to the last, and intermarried with Rokebys, Coniers, Constables, and Tunstalls, though on the ground of their religion they could no longer present to the living of Wycliffe. A private chapel of some kind would be a necessity for them as soon as the Reformation had made headway, and this may well have been the chapel in which Penitent Johnson was married towards the close of the seventeenth century.

It is but a melancholy picture which is presented to us of these Richmondshire Wycliffes, poor in purse, proscribed in religion, proud of heart, gradually fading away amongst the more substantial Northern Catholics, sternly repudiating the one strong member of their race who ranks with the great Worthies of England, and owing much of their later misfortune to the obstinacy with which they cherished the discarded faith. The last of the Wycliffes was a poor gardener, who dined every Sunday at Thorpe Hall, as the guest of Sir Marmaduke Tunstall, on the strength of his reputed descent.

It would be impossible to speak with confidence as to the origin of this family of Wycliffes. There is nothing to show whether they were Norman or English. The local surname would be natural enough in either case, and it is no more difficult to conceive a man of English origin bearing a Norman patronymic than it is to think of Anglo-Normans in the eighth or tenth generation who had lost their Norman characteristics and their Norman speech.

Wycliffe means "the water cliff." It is not the same name as that derived from "the white cliff," although the latter name also came to be written Wycliffe. The point is significant. There is a white cliff near Hipswell, and a hamlet called Whitcliff, which has been suggested as the place from which the Reformer took his name. But it is worthy of note that although we find more than twenty variations in the spelling of this name,\* it was never (so far as I am aware) spelt with a *t*, though John Wycliffe of Mayfield is occasionally called Whitcliffe.

As for the baptismal name of John, it was already more employed than any other; it was even in higher favour in the fourteenth century than it is in the nineteenth. If we can point to only two French kings and one English king of that name, there had been twenty-two Pope Johns when Wyclif was born. There is scarcely a list of proper names in the century wherein the Johns do not show a remarkable

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\* Wycliffe, Wycliff, Wyclif, Wyclyffe, Wyclef, Wycciff, Wyclyff, Wycklef, Wyclive, Wyckliff, Wykliffe, Wykliif, Wykcliff, Wykclyffe, Wyklive, Wiccliffe, Wicliff, Wicliif, Wicleff, Wiclef, Wicclfiff, Wickcliffe, Wicklef, Wigclif.

predominance. In Courtenay's Synod of 1382, for instance, seventy-three theologians and lawyers took part, and twenty-six of them were named John. Again, out of the twelve doctors assembled at Oxford by William Berton, who agreed in his condemnation of Wyclif's opinions in 1381, no fewer than nine were Johns. One of the writers of the *Chronicon Angliae*, probably himself a John, referring in a certain passage to Wyclif, says quaintly: "This fellow was called John—but he did not deserve to be. For he had cast away the grace which God gave him, turning from the truth which is in God, and giving himself up to fables."

If we are tempted to look with some doubt on the Hipswell conjecture, and to nurse the idea that John Wyclif was born in the home of the Wycliffes, we shall gain additional support for the general belief of the past five centuries that the father of the English Reformation was a scion of one of the most devout Catholic families of the North, the head of which was lord of the manor of Wycliffe-on-Tees. Let us see what contemporary records have to tell us about the Plantagenet Wycliffes.

The genealogy preserved by the Wycliffe family, which will be found recorded in Whitaker's *Richmondshire*, includes three generations admitted to be insufficiently proved.\* They are given in the fol-

\* Before a historical student could use a document of this kind with any degree of confidence, he would need to know the pedigree of the pedigree. Nothing more is claimed for the genealogy here quoted than that it preserves the traditions of the Wycliffe family at a comparatively late date, and that its accuracy in a number of particulars is supported by independent historical evidence.

lowing form—except that the dotted line is here introduced by way of conjecture :

Robert de Wycliff, Lord of Wycliffe, &c., 6 Edward I., by Kirkby's Inquest, 1287 [1278], held 12 car[uates] of land, &c., in Wycliffe, Thorp, and Girkington; married?—?

Roger Wycliffe, Lord of Wy- = Catherine, his wife, buried at  
cliffe, &c., 1319; buried at Wycliffe.  
Wycliffe.

[John Wyclif  
“Haereticus.”]

William Wycliffe of  
Wycliffe, esquire (married).

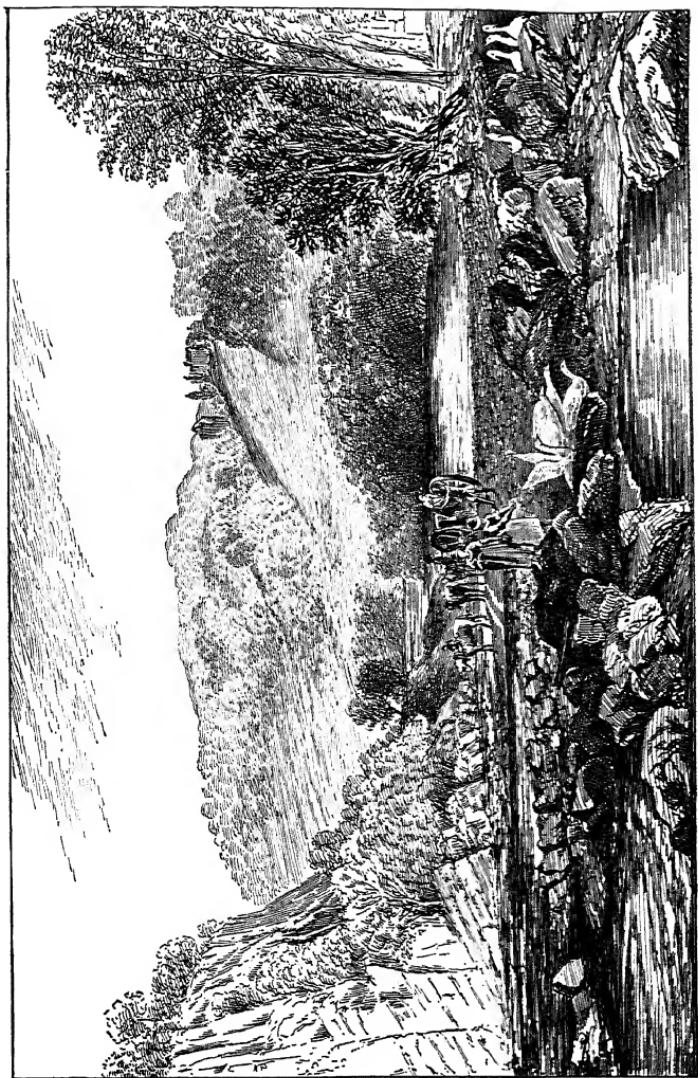
Now if the date 1319 above given is that of the marriage of Roger, which is probable (since Catherine Wycliffe was still living in 1369), it is a noteworthy coincidence that the year 1320 has generally been accepted, on independent grounds, as the approximate date of John Wyclif's birth. But there is more substantial evidence than this for the belief that Roger and Catherine Wycliffe were the actual father and mother of the future divinity lecturer at Oxford. Another link in the chain is supplied by a close catalogue of rectors of Wycliffe, quoted in Torre's *Archdeaconry of Richmond*, from which the following entries are taken :

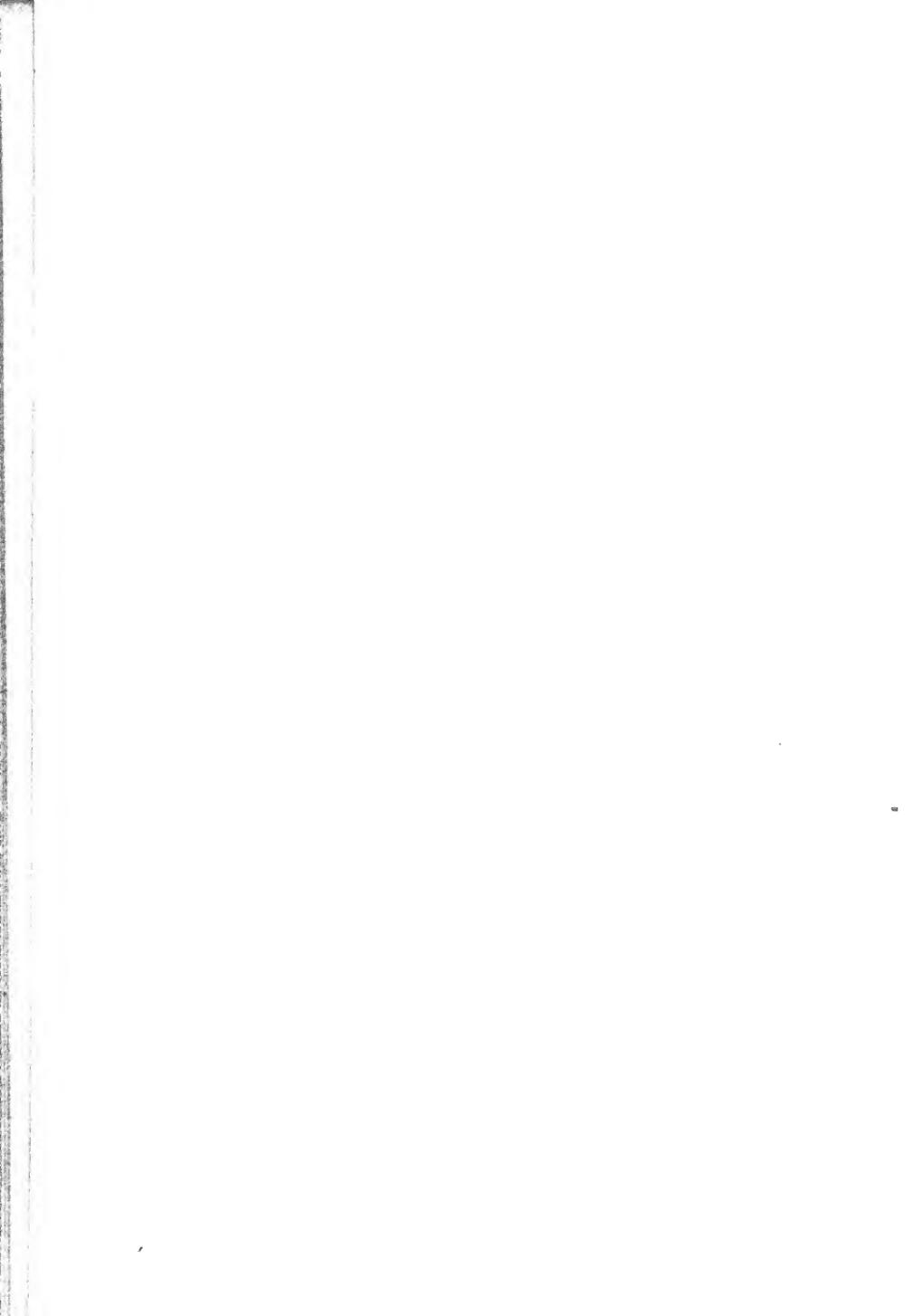
<i>Date.</i>	<i>Rectors.</i>	<i>Patrons.</i>
2 Aug. 1362	Dns Robert de Wycliffe, Cl.	Kath. relicta Rogi Wycliffe
7 Aug. 1363	Dns William de Wycliffe	John de Wycliffe
7 Oct. 1369	Dns Henr. Hugate, Cap.	<i>idem.</i>

The significance of the “ *idem* ” will be at once apparent. In 1362 Roger Wycliffe was dead, and the vacancy in the family living was supplied by his widow Catherine, who nominated Robert Wycliffe.

It need not be concluded from the genealogy already quoted that Roger Wycliffe had no brother, and only one son. The later Wycliffes had numerous families, and that was probably enough the case with Robert and Roger. At any rate, there was a Robert de Wycliffe, clerk, ready to take the living in 1362; and when he died, a year later, William de Wycliffe of Balliol College was appointed by John de Wycliffe to succeed him. Who was this John de Wycliffe? Observe that Dame Catherine had nominated in 1362, possibly after consulting John; that John nominated in 1363, possibly consulting Dame Catherine; and that in 1369 there was admittedly a consultation between Catherine and John, resulting in their joint nomination of Henry Hugate. Who could this John de Wycliffe be except the eldest son of Roger and Catherine, legally the lord of the manor, but leaving some of (perhaps nearly all) the duties and privileges of the lordship to his mother? The varying exercise of this patronage, as shown in the close catalogue, would be adequately explained on the supposition that John de Wycliffe was the eldest son of Roger, himself lord of the manor, an absentee from his small estate, living on his earned income as a secular priest and an Oxford lecturer, and leaving the management of the Wycliffe property to his widowed mother. In brief, the circumstances would be well explained by assuming that John Wyclif, the Reformer, was the son and heir of Roger Wycliffe.

If we are to be satisfied with this explanation, and to adopt it as a trustworthy detail of biography, our





conviction must be the result of a series of inferences, for it is idle to expect absolute proof after the lapse of five centuries. It will be said that the fact of a John Wycliffe acting in 1363 and 1369 as patron of the living, whilst it proves that there was a lord of the manor bearing that name in the years just mentioned, does not prove that he was John "the Heretic." True; but let us not miss the significance of the fact that no John Wycliffe at all is shown in the genealogy, as preserved in the family records. The close catalogue, which would not be in the keeping of the Wycliffes, retains the name of John as patron of the living of Wycliffe, with the strong presumption that he was lord of the manor during the widowhood of Dame Catherine. The genealogy, which is full and uninterrupted from the middle of the fifteenth century, makes not the slightest reference to him. What is the reasonable, not to say the necessary, inference? Clearly that this John Wycliffe had been deliberately erased from the record, for some reason which commended itself to this exceptionally devout and consistent family of Romanists.

According to the genealogy, it should have been William Wycliffe who appointed his namesake of Balliol after the death of his father. If he was alive in 1363, John must surely have been his elder brother. If he was dead, John may have been his next brother, or conceivably his uncle; for it is possible (though clearly improbable) that 1319 is the date of Roger's birth. As a matter of fact, John "Haereticus" refers in one of his Determinations to a brother "*olim mortuum.*" In any case John Wycliffe was an im-

portant member of the family, and he ought to be shown on the family tree. Why is he not ?

To such as feel a special interest in the personality of John Wyclif the Reformer it will be a matter of secondary concern whether he was or was not the son and heir of Roger, lord of Wycliffe, and of Catherine his wife. But his identification with the patron of Wycliffe rectory in 1363 and 1369 would tend to confirm our belief in his absolutely disinterested character, and in the sincerity of his profession of ecclesiastical poverty. The identification is manifestly assisted by the circumstances connected with the two nominations in question. John Wyclif was Master of Balliol up to 1361, when he took the college living of Fillingham. The rectors appointed to Wycliffe in 1363 and 1369 were both of them Balliol men.

If Wyclif was legally lord of the manor, then we possess, to begin with, a remarkable testimony to the nobility and thoroughness of his personal character ; and the whole tenor of his after life is such as to strengthen and deepen this first impression. The manor of Wycliffe was 720 acres—equivalent to a knight's fee\* ; and the rectory was worth £14 12s 1d. As living was interpreted in those days, there was a competence both for the esquire and for the rector. During the reign of Edward III. money was found, from one source or another, to restore the fabric of the church.

\* Duodecim carucatæ faciunt unum fœdum Militis.—*Fleta*, ii. 72. iv.

At some date which cannot be determined, John Wyclif came up to Oxford ; and here he prepared himself for the secular priesthood, probably as a scholar of Balliol College, which had recently been founded by John Balliol of Barnard Castle. This Barnard Castle, about ten miles from Richmond, stands on the northern side of the Durham border, and looks up the splendid vista of Teesdale. It was the same Barnard Castle at which, on the morrow of the fight of Marston Moor, a degenerate Wycliffe paid the penalty of his treachery, and furnished a theme for the author of *Rokeby*.

The foundation and enlargement of the earlier colleges at Oxford were stimulated at times by other reasons than the desire of benevolent persons to establish homes for poor students at what was now recognised as the "second school of the Church." There were already scores of halls at Oxford, as well as the houses of the various Orders ; and it was not even necessary that the boys and young men who attended the lectures of the professors should reside in dwellings licensed for their reception, though doubtless many of them did so. Poverty was no bar in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries against an education at Oxford. Many a penniless lad begged his way to the famous home of learning, and, once there, begged his sustenance from day to day, content if he could keep body and soul together —which, it may be feared, was by no means always possible. For the vast majority of Oxford students, life was hard and precarious at the best, and surrounded by conditions of violence which often flared

up into bloodthirsty riots. The grammar schools and licensed halls were a partial protection against the townspeople, but scarcely any against the faction-fights within the University itself.

In view of these and other dangers—amongst which the proselytism of the monks and friars must have seemed to many parents the most formidable of all—the colleges of Merton, Balliol, and University, followed in the fourteenth century by Queen's, Oriel, and Exeter, were founded not so much to bring education at Oxford within the reach of the poor as to make the conditions of university life more safe, more tolerable, and more refined. It is not without significance, if we bear in mind the constant rivalry of the Northern and Southern “nations” amongst the students, and the superior number and strength of the latter, that two out of the first three colleges, Balliol and University, were founded for students from the North of England. Merton had led the way by accepting none but Southerners; and these sharp distinctions would naturally have the effect of intensifying the rivalry of the two nations.

Now for such comforts and immunity as these endowed and comparatively well-disciplined colleges afforded, it would be necessary in one form or another to pay. To live at one of them would be more expensive than to put up with the rough lodging and fare of a “chamber dekyn,” or to enter at the average hall; and it is reasonable to suppose that a student at Balliol or Merton, unless he came to Oxford at the charges of a wealthy patron, must have belonged to a fairly prosperous family. Ac-

cording to an undisturbed tradition, John Wyclif was a scholar at Balliol, either as soon as he came up or after preliminary training at a grammar school. He afterwards became fellow and master of the college. Under the Balliol statutes no one could be made master who was not already a fellow; and, though the condition might be literally fulfilled by electing an outsider successively fellow and master, this supposition seems to be more hazardous than to accept the statement that Balliol was originally Wyclif's college. But there is no record, so far as is known, of the date when he came into residence, either at Oxford or at Balliol.

As Wyclif was a fellow, and as he would doubtless specialise in theology as early as possible, it may be supposed that the fellowship which he accepted was a clerical one. Now it is on record that, up to the year 1340, no fellow of Balliol was allowed to proceed to a degree in theology, whereas in that year six fellowships were founded on the express condition that their holders should incept in divinity within thirteen years. Wyclif was a Bachelor of Divinity in 1366, but there is nothing to show that he had not taken that degree several years earlier. If he was bent on remaining at Oxford, and remaining as a secular clergyman devoted to the study of theology, it seems likely that he would have sought to gain a footing in some other college after incepting as a Master of Arts, unless the theological fellowships had been endowed at the time when he took that degree. The approximate age at which the M.A. degree was taken in those days may be put at

twenty. So far, then, as there is any force in these considerations, it may be inferred that Wyclif was not more than twenty years old in 1340; and this would point to 1320 as the earliest probable date of his birth. Since he died a fairly old and broken man in 1384, it does not appear to be safe to assign a later date.

During the third and fourth decades of his life, Wyclif must have been accumulating the stores of learning on which his academic repute was primarily founded. Above all he would be deeply immersed in the study of the Schoolmen, with whose writings he afterward showed a familiar acquaintance. It has been said that he probably had the opportunity of listening to Bradwardine and Ockham. Marsiglio's *Defensor Pacis* would be easily within his reach. The famous Bishop Grosteste, whom the Schoolmen called Lincolnensis, was still a name to charm with in Oxford. The Franciscan Bacon thought him pre-eminent in the sciences, and even John Tyssyngton—a doughty opponent of Wyclif—declared that he paled the modern doctors as the sun paled the moon. Matthew of Paris wrote of him that “he was a manifest confuter of the pope and the king, the blamer of prelates, the corrector of monks, the director of priests, the instructor of clerks, the support of scholars, a preacher to the people, the persecutor of the incontinent, the sedulous student of all scripture, the hammer and the despiser of the Romans. At the table of bodily refreshment he was hospitable, eloquent, courteous, pleasant, and affable.” Strike out the single word “king,” and this character would ap-

ply with remarkable precision to Wyclif himself, who took Grosteste as a model for imitation.

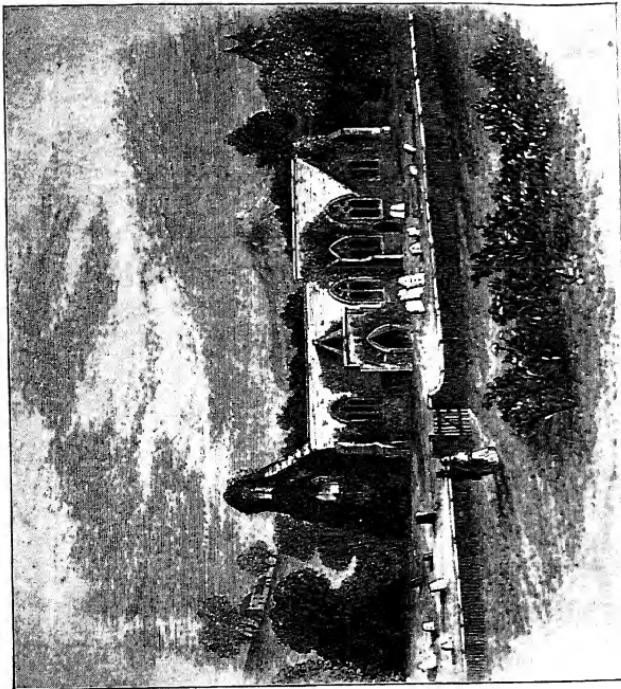
There was another man who undoubtedly had a strong and a personal influence on the character of Wyclif, one of the latest and broadest of the Schoolmen, Archbishop Fitzralph of Armagh, who was much at Oxford up to the year 1347. During the last ten years of his life (1350–60), Fitzralph threw himself into the controversy on evangelical poverty, carried to Avignon the grievances of the secular clergy against the mendicant friars, and wrote (amongst other works) a book on *The Poverty of Our Saviour*—in which, however, he dwelt but lightly on the contrast between the life of Christ and that of his latter-day disciples, which had been so deeply resented from the Italian Fraticelli. Some of the latter had contended that Jesus himself begged for his living, which the Irish prelate strongly denied, and which Wyclif even denounced as blasphemous. Fitzralph was on excellent terms with Popes Clement and Innocent; but the friars had made their position too strong to be seriously affected, even by the great “Armachanus,” or by the “Doctor Evangelicus” (as Wyclif came to be called), who took up the case against them from the relaxing fingers of his friend and counsellor.

It was in the very year of Fitzralph’s death that we find Wyclif, now about forty years old, engaged at Oxford in the earliest stage of an acute struggle between the authorities and the friars, which endured for something like six years. The friars wanted to have the privilege of proceeding to the degree of Doctor in

Divinity without previously qualifying as “regents in arts,” but their claims were firmly resisted by the authorities and the seculars. Wyclif would be associated in this controversy with John Thoresby, afterwards Archbishop of York, with his life-long friend Nicholas Hereford, with Uhtred Bolton, Walter Bryt, Philip Norris, and others.

Meanwhile Wyclif had become Master of Balliol; and here again we are baffled by the extraordinary want of accurate detail by which his life is dogged. It is a mere matter of conjecture in what year, between 1356 and 1361, he was elected to this honourable position. Amongst the deeds preserved by Balliol College there are several notarial documents showing how, as proctor for the college, he went down to Abbotsley on the 8th of April, 1361, together with one of his colleagues and an independent notary public, and formally took possession of the church and rectory on behalf of his college. He duly seized the ring on the church door, smote the bells, touched and handled the “ornaments,” received oblations and young pigeons, and freely disposed of the same. The documents are very particular. In one of them Wyclif is described as “Magister Johannes de Wycliff, Magister, sive Custos, Collegii Aulæ de Balliolo.” In another document the “college of the said hall” of Balliol is represented as being made up of “Master John de Wykclyff, Sir Hugh de Wakfeld” (who was a notary public), “John de Hugat, John de Prestwold, Roger de Gysburgh, Willian Alayn, Thomas de Lincoln, William de

WYCLIFFE CHURCH,  
PARTLY CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH WYCLIF (1).





Wyklyffe, Richard de Assewelle, John Bridde, and Hugh de Feltone."

It is particularly unfortunate that so much obscurity rests upon the details of Wyclif's career at Oxford, since, as Mr. Brodrick observes in his short history of the University, "the biography of this remarkable man, if authentic materials for it existed, would cover almost the whole academic history of Oxford during the latter part of the fourteenth century." There is an entry of one John Wyclif in the books of Merton College as a fellow in 1356; but it is highly improbable that this was our Wyclif. There is apparently nothing authentic to support the identification, and the presumption in favour of concluding that the Reformer was a fellow of Balliol in the year just named is decidedly strong. So far as precise records go, all that we can say is that he was Master of that college in April and in July, 1361. He may have held the office for one or more years, since there is no record of a predecessor after William of Kingston, who followed Robert of Derby, Master at the end of 1356. As no precise dates seemed to have been preserved between the two just mentioned, but only the facts that Robert of Derby was Master in 1356 and that Wyclif succeeded William of Kingston, it is just conceivable that Wyclif may have been Master for as long a time as four years. At any rate he accepted, in 1361, the college living of Fillingham, in the archdeaconry of Stow, in the diocese of Lincoln, being instituted as rector on the 16th of May.

The next established incidents in his career bring us face to face with certain facts already referred to, which possess considerable importance from several points of view. Not long after he had become Rector of Fillingham, in the course of the year 1363, John de Wycliffe presented William de Wycliffe, a clerical fellow of Balliol, to the rectory of Wycliffe-on-Tees. And on the next voidance of that living, in the year 1369, John de Wycliffe is again recorded as having presented a Balliol man, in the person of Henry Hugate—probably a relative of the John Hugate who succeeded Wyclif as Master of the college.

It is a coincidence that he came up to Oxford from Fillingham on each of the two occasions when Wycliffe-on-Tees fell vacant—in 1363, when he took rooms at Queen's College, and again in 1368, when his bishop gave him a prolonged leave of absence, in order that he might “devote himself to the study of letters at Oxford.” He may or may not have heard in 1368 that the family living was about to be vacated. In any case he would be in Oxford, and in close association with his old friends and “commensales” at Balliol, when the presentation again fell into his hands, and he offered it to Hugate.

It was just at this latter date that Wyclif exchanged his rectory of Fillingham for that of Ludgarshall, or Lutgurshall, in the archdeaconry of Buckingham. If there was any question of private arrangement in all this, and if his presentation of Hugate to Wycliffe-on-Tees facilitated his transference to Ludgarshall, the fact would be entirely and conspicuously to Wyclif's credit, since Ludgarshall was a poorer liv-

ing than Fillingham, and to move from one to the other involved a loss of income.

Why, it may be asked, should Wyclif, who had elected and prepared himself for the life of a secular clergyman, twice decline to undertake the charge of a parish so near to his own birthplace, if it was not actually his birthplace, and which must have been in some respects attractive to him? A simple answer suggests itself. Wyclif was by this time, if not a Southerner in sympathies, at least bound up with the life and interests of Oxford, and bent on pursuing his ambitions by cultivating his friends in the political world. To go to Wycliffe-on-Tees as its rector, to devote his life and his means to rebuilding and decorating the old church, and to spend his days with the rough and not very intellectual men of the Yorkshire borders, must have appeared to him in the light of a banishment, not to say a deliberate desertion of the path of duty which had opened up to him elsewhere. He wanted to live in the South, within easy reach of Oxford and London; and so bent was he on being close to his work that, as he had preferred a Lincolnshire living to a residence in one of the most beautiful of north-country dales, he subsequently removed to a poorer parish because it lay between his beloved university and the capital.

There was another reason why he would not be keen to present himself to Wycliffe-on-Tees. The thing would smack to his sensitive mind of an abuse which he particularly hated, and against which he had already publicly declared. Appropriation to individuals of the trust-funds of the Church, in any

shape or form, was in Wyclif's eyes abominable ; and, however the presentation to this living had come into the hands of his family, he could not regard it in any other light than as a sacred responsibility, which would in no wise be discharged by nominating himself. In the English tract, *Of the Last Age of the Church*—though no stress is here laid for the purpose of argument on the authorship or date of this tract—we come upon this fine passage : “ Both vengeance of sword and mischiefs unknown before, by which men in these days have had to be punished, were bound to happen for sin of priests. Men shall fall on them and cast them out of their fat benefices, and they shall say, ‘ One came into his benefice by his kindred, another by covenant made before ; one for service and another for money came into God’s church.’ Then shall every such priest cry, ‘ Alas, alas ! that no good spirit dwelled in me at my coming into God’s church.’ ”

Now if it were accepted as a reasonable supposition that Wyclif was from 1363 the legal head of his family, and patron of the living of Wycliffe-on-Tees, there would be no further need to press the point that he was a man of gentle breeding and (at least potentially) of some private means. That he had character, tact, and the power of impressing and influencing his fellow-men, is proved by his high standing at Oxford, his popularity as a lecturer, and his selection to be master of a college. It is true that there were amongst his contemporaries “ divinely gifted men ” of humble origin, who broke their birth’s invidious bar and rose to the highest

positions in Church and State. But to enjoy the friendship of John of Gaunt, and the favour of the King and the Princess of Wales, to be nominated as king's chaplain and royal commissioner, to be called on by Parliament to plead the cause of the nation against the Pope, to keep men at work for years on the translation of the Bible, and to send out a band of missionaries with some equipment, however poor —this argues that Wyclif had money at his command, and that he was a man of affairs and a man of address.

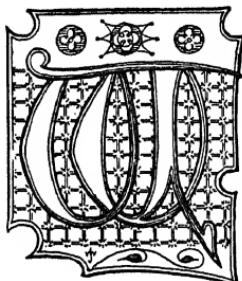


ORIGINAL SEAL OF  
BALLIOL COLLEGE, 1282.



## CHAPTER VI.

### WYCLIF AS POLITICIAN.



YCLIF had displayed his best qualities at Oxford, where he was devotedly loved. He was essentially strong in all the relations of life, save in the unfortunate particular of physical health. If there be one note in his character more prominent than the rest, it is that of spontaneous and effective championship. He was the champion of seculars against regulars, of the University against Pope and hierarchy, of the ignorant masses against obscurants, of the nation against the Papacy, of the new truth as he had seen it against friars, bishops, and papal bulls. Men of all classes, from peasant to Parliament and King, looked to him at one time or another for strength, inspiration, or protection, and they did not look in vain.

His energy never failed him, and his confidence was inexhaustible and inflexible.

Even before he threw himself into politics—before he became chaplain to the King and made the acquaintance of John of Gaunt, who was some twenty years his junior—Wyclif seems to have been as widely known as a man could be in those days, with no higher title to fame than that he was a learned Oxford doctor, a bold and vigorous preacher, and an upholder of the poor. He was fast winning his way to the hearts of his countrymen, and creating that deep impression on the men of his day, friends and enemies alike, which was to make his mark for all time.

Of Wyclif's characteristic opinions on matters of Church and State, there will be more to be said hereafter. Meanwhile his ideas had been moulded and his conclusions were being shaped by a series of events as striking as any which have occurred within the limits of our history as a nation.

Still fresh and vivid in the fourteenth century must have been the impression stamped upon the minds of Englishmen by the marvellous developments of the Church of Rome during the past hundred years. The encroachments of the Papacy from the time when Innocent III. had laid England under tribute would seem almost as recent and familiar to Wyclif in his teens as the records of the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny are to the men of the present generation. When he began to take an interest in contemporary events, the successor of Innocent and Boniface was not at Rome but at Avignon, figuring

as it were in the triumph of the French king—a vassal to the monarch who still claimed to be over-lord of Norman England. Already the French were our hereditary foes, and the Vicars of Christ, assuming universal dominion, were now virtually instruments in the hand of the enemy. The more haughtily the Plantagenets asserted their independence, the more inadmissible and ridiculous the assumption of the Popes would appear to every patriotic Englishman. King John's tribute of a thousand marks had been paid for the last time to Pope John XXII. After 1333—at any rate after the Pope's death in 1334—it was never paid again. Benedict claimed it, but it was refused, and even the payment of Peter's pence was discontinued (at any rate partially) for a time. Benedict was honest, virtuous, and weak. Clement VI. (1342–1352) was the exact opposite of his predecessor, the precise negation of Christian virtues; and his conduct in holding the jubilee of 1350 for the sake of its golden harvest, whilst all Europe was writhing under the plague, was surely the head and front of his offending. No fervent Christian, no Englishman who loved his country, could do otherwise at this time than hold the political and even the spiritual claims of the Popes at Avignon in contempt and disregard.

If the papal jubilee of 1350 doubled the horrors of the plague in the eyes of all right-judging persons, the effect which had already been produced by that fatal epidemic is almost inconceivable. It overshadowed the life, and must in some measure have affected the character, of every one who lived

through it. At the universities in particular it would long continue to be a memorable landmark, if only for its effect in largely diminishing the number of students. A man of Wyclif's devout and sympathetic disposition could not fail to be deeply moved by what he had seen and heard of the pestilence, and of the ecstasies of repentance, self-torture, and reaction which followed closely in its train.

From the capture of Calais to the treaty of Brétigny (1347–1360), Wyclif would be penetrated, in common with his countrymen, by the military achievements of Edward III. and the Prince of Wales, by the collapse of the French armies, and by the annexation of some of the fairest provinces of France. He probably saw the captive kings in London; and he must have heard of the rich spoils carried home by the soldiers, or sent by settlers to their friends in England, where, according to enthusiastic contemporaries, there was scarcely a house which did not contain some ornament or other valuable brought over from the conquered country. He may have seen and conversed with the famous son of a Gloucestershire outlaw, Richard Whittington, who, after his own death, presided three times over the merchant princes of the metropolis. He would not be ignorant of the vast accumulation of land and wealth in the hands of a comparatively small section of the nation. And side by side with this wealth he saw—we know from his writings that he saw—the misery of the serfs, the poverty and starvation of the labourers, the grinding taxation of the industrious classes, and the growing

discontent of the common people with their condition and prospects.

Facts like these are wont to temper the metal of the strongest minds, to urge on the best men to higher aims, and to touch their spirits to finer issues. If the fourteenth century was critical and luminous beyond comparison with those on either side of it, was it not in some measure because the men of that day had been thus keenly tempered and finely touched?

It is only in a particular and limited sense that Wyclif can be properly spoken of as a politician. Certainly he took a deep interest in the politics of his time, looking to them for results which, in his opinion, would be highly advantageous to the cause of true religion. He may or may not have been an active intriguer with John of Gaunt, and with John's intended brother-in-law, the Earl of Pembroke. The probability is that the Duke had a young man's enthusiasm for the famous Oxford preacher, who might well have been his tutor (as Burley of Merton was tutor to the Prince of Wales), and that he asked his advice on sundry questions touching the rights and status of the clergy. They must have had many feelings in common, so far as the relations of State and Church were concerned, and Wyclif could not but admire the spirit and pluck of the Duke, so long as they were honestly directed to humble the pride of haughty ecclesiastics.

We do not know at what precise date John Wyclif was appointed one of the king's chaplains. He speaks of himself in 1366 as "*peculiaris regis clericus*

*talis qualis.*" The last two words might almost imply that he was an occasional preacher before the Court by invitation rather than by formal appointment, though they would equally well indicate a modest self-depreciation, quite in keeping with his ordinary style. If we did not know that Wyclif actually discharged some of the functions of a royal chaplain, in his character as a secular priest, we might be content to take the *regis clericus* in what would perhaps be its most natural signification—that of a cleric learned in the canon and civil law, and consulted by the Crown as a lawyer rather than as a clergyman. Wyclif's reports to Parliament, however, carefully avoid any claim to speak with authority on legal points. It seems most natural to conclude that he had a regular appointment as chaplain, and that he spent some of his time every year in the train of the monarch, and in association with members of his Court. Perhaps it was in this way that he first made the acquaintance of John of Gaunt; but on the other hand his good connections in the North may have procured for him an introduction to the King's son, who had married Blanche of Lancaster in 1360. In any case Wyclif was soon in high favour; and he exercised an influence, amongst others, on the unhappy and doubtless scandalous Alice Perrers, who seems to have been an able manager of men, and who was certainly susceptible to the charms of his fiery and pungent eloquence.

However this may have been, it cannot be doubted that, when Wyclif came into touch with the political forces of the time, he would aim at the promotion of

ecclesiastical reforms through the secular authorities, just as these authorities must have expected to gain through him the alliance of a revolutionary party within the Church.

The bolder spirits of the fourteenth century who entered more or less consciously and deliberately into this combination, directed as it was towards the attainment of civil and religious reform, were not altogether without warrant if they began by nursing sanguine hopes of success. It was not for them to foresee that the destiny of England required her still to pick her dreary way through a chaos of mental darkness and desperate civil war. They could only realise their own regeneration, and anticipate the harvest of their own toil. The bright visions excited in ardent and enthusiastic minds in the age of the Plantagenets, by the lives of such men as Wyclif and Chaucer, by the growing vigour of Parliament, by the championship of Lancaster at his best, by the rich endowment and achievement of the universities, were not on the face of them more chimerical, more foredoomed to disappointment, than those which flashed before the minds of Englishmen in the days of the Tudors, as they witnessed the work of Cranmer, of Thomas Cromwell, of the Council of Edward VI., of John Milton, of the schoolmasters in the sixteenth century. If the disappointment of the earlier hope was predestined and inevitable, as the shapeless blossom is enfolded in the cankered bud, neither Wyclif nor John of Gaunt, nor any of the optimists of their generation, could have foreseen the abortive failure. How often in the history of our country have

the first hopes of eager and earnest reformers been doomed to extinction—and how often in the long run has the original failure been the groundwork of eventual success !

No section of Wyclif's public life stands in greater need of elucidation than the eight years from 1366 to 1374. One would gladly know the terms of the intimacy, the nature of the understanding, between him and the young Duke of Lancaster. Where, in what circumstances, and how often did they meet ? In what vein did they discuss the tendencies of the time and the chances of an effective Reformation ? How far did their mutual obligations lead them in a common course of action ? The historical romancer might paint for us their interviews and report their conversation. By some happy instinct he might hit upon their several motives and policies, and show us the grave, acute, strong-minded, and feeble-bodied priest, advising and restraining the impatient prince, who at this time would have been little more than half his age, and whose headstrong vehemence must now and again have filled the more prudent Reformer (himself no mincer of speech) with uneasy qualms. But imagination will not fill the gap which is left by facts. In the absence of such personal details as we could only learn from an autobiography, or from the narrative of a friendly contemporary, or from letters written at the time,—and no one can say that we have yet put our hands upon all the important manuscripts bearing on this age—we must be content to take the measure of the conditions by which Wyclif was surrounded,

and of the events in which we know that he bore his part.

At the time when he was brought into contact with the English Parliament, that body had but recently become effective for other purposes than the granting of supplies, and the presenting of petitions which might or might not form the basis of ordinances. The inferior ranks of the Church dignitaries had ceased to attend, the clergy sitting apart in a Convocation of their own. The prelates still sat with the barons—twenty-seven abbots and two priors in addition to the bishops; whilst the knights of the shires sat with the burgesses from the towns. The Lords and Commons thus constituted had begun to pass their statutes, and forward them to the monarch for his assent. Not only had Parliament deposed a king in 1327, but it had repeatedly checked the arbitrary levy of taxes by Edward III. The Commons had expressly claimed freedom of speech, the finality of elections by constituencies, the immunity of their Speaker, and the right to audit public accounts. It was already the established rule that the two Houses should meet every year; and the failure to issue writs for upwards of a year, towards the close of Edward's reign, was deeply resented.\* Parliament was thus a very powerful and serviceable body, even

\* Too much of Parliament may be at least as objectionable as too little of it. In January, 1379, after the Commons had with difficulty been prevailed upon to grant large supplies, they petitioned the Crown that they might not be called together again within the year. This is quite consistent with their resentment, four years earlier, when the twelve months were exceeded.

in presence of a monarch as wilful and haughty as Edward III. Wyclif might well have expected that such an instrument—a “two-handed engine” which already in those days involved the power and strength of the nation—would be able to effect the great object which he had been courageous enough to desire. There are sundry passages in his writings which show that he took a strong interest in parliamentary debates affecting either the National Church or the Church of Rome. It may be that his chaplaincy imposed upon him certain clerical duties in connection with the meeting of the Houses, which rendered his presence necessary. At all events he refers more than once to discussions which he had heard amongst the Lords at Westminster. He had opportunities for preaching, and we know that he made a strong impression by his sermons in London. Perhaps the first of these opportunities was when he had to preach to King and Parliament at the opening of the session of 1366.

So far as the attitude of the State towards the papal authority was concerned, there was at this time very little difference of opinion amongst Englishmen. Apart from the Italians whom Rome had thrust into English benefices, and from Italianised members of the regular and secular clergy, all were against the papal assumptions. Wyclif's firmest opponent in the ranks of the hierarchy, William Courtenay, who rose to be Archbishop of Canterbury, was in this sense anti-papal. The clergy of England had had long and grievous struggles with a succession of monarchs in defence of their possessions,

against what they doubtless considered unjust and exorbitant taxation: but they showed more than once that they preferred the exactions of the King to the exactions of Rome. And, as a matter of fact, the Church and the various Orders in England had grown so enormously rich that if they had not paid heavy ransoms throughout the century, and borne a very considerable share of the cost of the wars, they could not have escaped with their title-deeds. Their possessions were so largely increased after sundry visitations of the Black Death, which shook the tree of superstition until their garners were full of its fruit, that the taxable area outside the Church was sensibly and even seriously diminished. Henceforth, if not before, it was one of the political axioms of intelligent English laymen that the State could never thrive again until the Church had been made to restore the immense superfluity of wealth which pious Christians had bestowed upon her. And the truth is that it never did thrive until the earlier Tudors had redressed the balance, at any rate so far as the Orders had disturbed it.

John of Gaunt seems to have entered political life with the special object of enforcing this restoration of property by the Church, and for a time it looked as though nothing could save the clergy from the zeal of the Duke and the barons. "Never," says Mr. Green, "had the spiritual or moral hold of the Church on the nation been less; never had her wealth been greater. Out of a population of little more than two millions the ecclesiastics numbered between twenty and thirty thousand, owning in

landed property alone more than a third of the soil ; their 'spiritualities' in dues and offerings amounting to twice the royal revenue." Such a condition of things must indeed be a peril to any nation ; and no one could call himself a statesman in those days without recognising the evil and seeking a remedy for it. That is a justification for much of the Duke's subsequent conduct, as well as for Wyclif's participation in politics.

It was in 1366, as already stated, that the Rector of Fillingham was invited by Parliament to show cause against the further payment of tribute to Rome. The matter called for argument rather than authority ; the tribute was already largely in arrear, for Englishmen could no longer brook the humiliation bequeathed to them by one of the most worthless of their kings. Nothing had been paid since 1333, and the conquerors of Crécy and Poitiers were not minded to renew the payment of an annual subsidy which stamped them as vassals to the vassal of France. The Pope had pressed for his dues, which Parliament declined to pay. The former had found his champion in the person of a monk who had apparently addressed a remonstrance to Parliament ; and Wyclif was called upon to reply to this document.

He did so in a Latin tract or "determination" on *Lordship*,\* which maintained—with the same distinction between temporal and spiritual things which had often been urged in the discussions on ecclesiastical poverty—that the State was always entitled

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\* *Determinatio quadam de Dominio.*

to refuse tribute to the Roman Pontiff, to try ecclesiastics in its own courts, and to take away, for fit and proper cause, the possessions of ecclesiastics.

"My Doctor," says Wyclif,—“my Doctor with his brethren demands, with a certain excess of vehement insistence, with effervescence and swelling of the spirit, that I should reply to him categorically in the terms of his argument, and more particularly as regards the case which he makes for the Pope against the authority of the King. Every lordship, says he, given under a condition, exists only so long as that condition has not been destroyed. Now the Pope gave the realm of England to our King on condition that England would pay seven hundred marks each year [and Ireland three hundred]. But this condition has been abolished by lapse of time and circumstances: wherefore the King of England has lost the true lordship of England."

It is curious, Wyclif goes on to say, that the case should be put to me in this pointed way; and my friends tell me that it has been done for three reasons—first, that, as soon as I have answered, I may be denounced to the Roman Curia, censured, and deprived of my position; secondly, that the favour of Rome may be secured for himself and his friends; thirdly, that secular lordships may be heaped upon the abbeys, by the extension of the papal authority in England, without the wholesome restraint of brotherly expostulation. “But I, as a humble and obedient son of the Roman Church, protest that I do not mean to make any contention which would so much as sound like an insult, or

give reasonable cause of offence to pious ears. Wherefore in the first instance I would invite my reverend friend the Doctor to deal with the following argument, which was held, as I have been told, by a number of secular lords in a certain Council." Then he proceeds to unfold his case against the tribute, manifestly devising this pious fraud in order to deprive his opponent of the opportunity of triumphing over him as a rebellious priest. The seven lords are seven arguments; and they are substantially of this kind:

1. England was won with the sword and defended with the sword. No tribute can go on for ever without an appeal to the sword.
2. Tribute should only be paid to those who are fit to receive it. The Pope ought to be poor, like Christ, and to leave tribute to Cæsars.
3. As the Pope is "servant of the servants of God," he can only take his dues in return for service rendered. But he renders no service to England; and, services being denied, the tribute also may be properly refused.
4. An overlord cannot be expected to pay tribute, and the King of England is overlord in England. If the Pope were overlord of the ecclesiastical property, he would be paramount over one-third of England, which cannot be allowed. But if he holds of the King, it is he who ought to be paying tribute.
5. Pope Innocent made King John pay for his absolution and for other spiritual ministrations—which was flat simony; and every one is entitled to repudiate an immoral contract.

6. If the Pope really gave England to John, as a lord gives to his vassal, he gave it for a ridiculously small fee; and on the same principle he might squander the rest of Christendom in the same way. We ought to make a stand at once. And as the theologians say that a man who is in mortal sin forfeits his dominion, and the Pope is liable to sin, one mortal overlord is quite enough for us, and we had better give our goods to the poor instead of to the Pope, and hold of Christ alone.

7. My colleagues are forgetting the unwisdom of the King and the supreme right of the nation, without whose consent no lasting contract can be made to its damage.

“Now,” says Wyclif, after reciting arguments of this kind, and so neatly turning the tables on the monk who had desired to entrap him, “unless the Doctor can support the rational character of his argument against these contentions of the English lords, it has no force against the position of our lord the King.”

For those days the rejoinder was quite sufficient, and was held to have served its turn. The claim for tribute was dropped again, and Wyclif, by the cogency of his reasoning, earned both credit amongst his friends and odium at Rome. Unwelcome as such reasoning would naturally be to the Papacy, and to its warmest friends in England, there was so far no attempt to fix any charge of heresy on Wyclif. Nevertheless it was about this time that John Kyngham, a Carmelite Friar, began to wage a pertinacious fight with him, challenging him on the score

of certain opinions in his academic treatise, *De Esse Intelligibili Creaturæ*.\* Kynyngham was somewhat *impar congressus*; he seems to have been mild of mood and speech, gentle and self-depreciatory; but that he should have attacked the strongest of his contemporaries, and stuck to the attack for nearly twenty years, showed at any rate that he found controversy a congenial pursuit.

It was a great crisis in the life of Wyclif. A high compliment had been paid him, not merely in making him a king's chaplain, but also in looking to him to plead the cause of the nation against the Pope. Already it was clear he had attracted the notice of all who were tired of the dominion of Rome, and was recognised as peculiarly well equipped for this act of championship. His friend, the King's son, was at the head of a strong party of complaisant earls and barons. The King was weak and pliable in the hands of the young Duke, and, though the Prince of Wales was by no means of one mind with his intriguing brother, he would scarcely be a fatal obstacle in the way of an equitable reform of the Church. The popular hostility to Rome, coupled as it was with an intense dislike of the foreign workmen in London and the manufacturing centres, was sufficiently strong to encourage the hope that the fourteenth century might see the last of the Romescot, and of papal intervention in England. But it may be questioned whether the Reformers did not unwittingly exaggerate the strength or the extent of

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\* *On the Conventional Existence of God's Creation.*

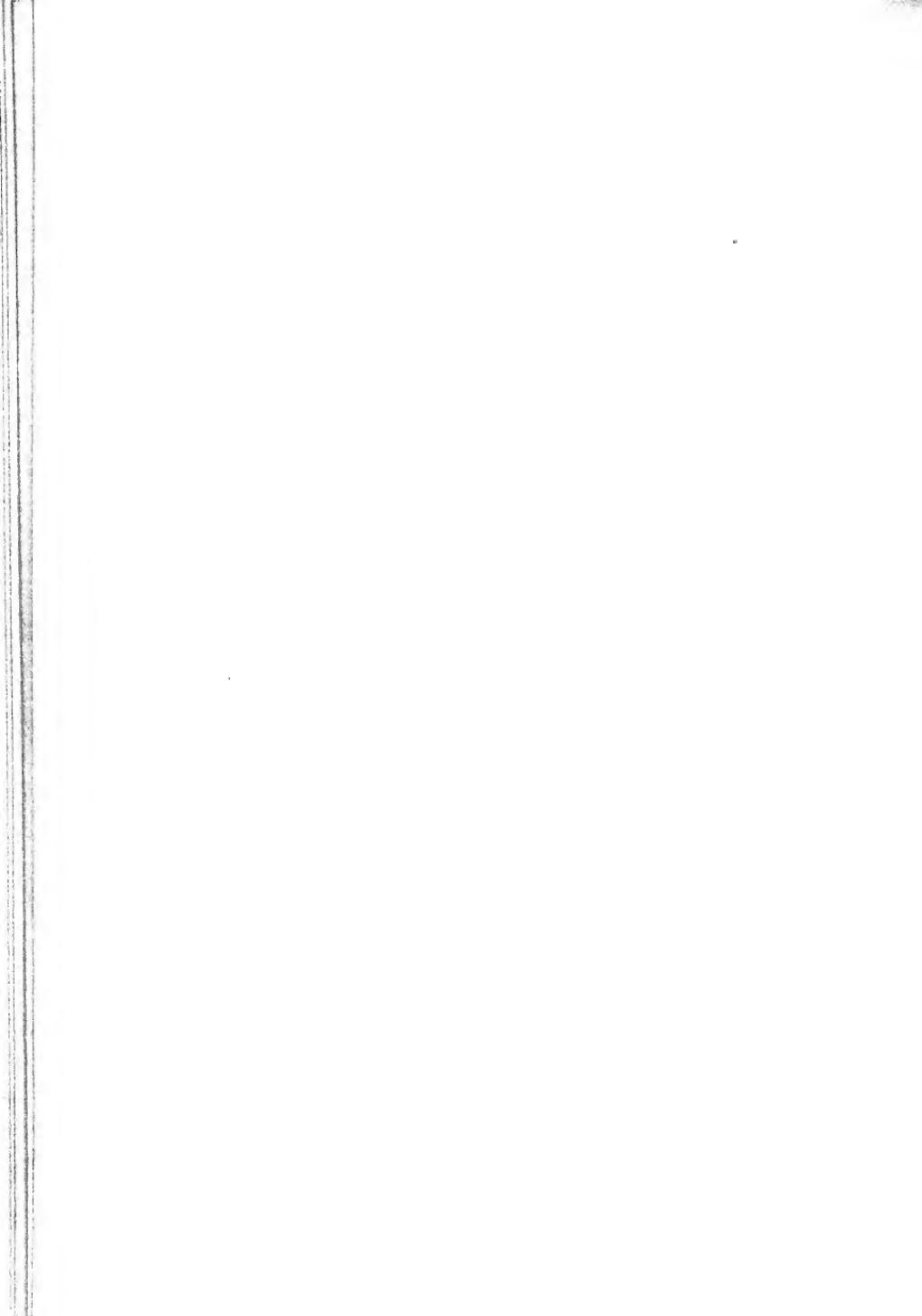
the feeling against the excessive endowments of the Church.

Lancaster and his friends came to open issue with the Church party almost as soon as the Duke began to take an interest in public affairs. William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, and a prince of pluralists, was President of the King's Council in 1370, and he was regarded with not a little jealousy in various quarters. He was very naturally obnoxious to the anti-clericals in the two Houses, who did not see why the clergy, having their own Convocation, and a potent voice amongst the Lords, should also hold the presidency of the Council and the principal posts under the Crown. The discontent on this ground came to a head in the year just named, when Parliament sent a petition to the King requesting "that it will please our said lord the King that the laymen of the said kingdom who are sufficient and able of estate may be chosen for this (the task of government), and that no other person be hereafter made Chancellor, Treasurer, Clerk of the Privy Seal, Baron of the Exchequer, Chamberlain of the Exchequer, Controller, and all other great officers and governors of the said kingdom."

This demand was followed at once by the removal of the Bishops of Winchester and Exeter from the Council, and by the appointment in their place of Robert Thorpe as Chancellor and Richard le Scrope as Treasurer. The Duke for a few years to come had the reins of power in his hands, and it seemed as if the opportunity had arrived for striking his decisive blow.



WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM, BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.  
FROM A PORTRAIT BY J. FABER IN THE HALL OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.



At the outset, Parliament was strongly and unmistakably on his side. Until misfortunes abroad and corruption at home brought discredit upon Lancaster and his colleagues, we hear little of opposition in the Commons. It was not likely that the knights and burgesses would protest against the heavy burdens laid upon the Church, though they were very stiff when it came to a question of taxing wool and moveables. Doubtless there would be vigorous remonstrances in the representative chamber when the King claimed increasing dues on the raw material of Norwich fustians, Sudbury baize, Kentish broad-cloths, Colchester sayes and serges, Kendal cloth, Devonshire kerseys, Welsh friezes, Taunton serges, and the various cloths produced in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, in Sussex, Berkshire, and Hampshire. But, when the demand was addressed to the rulers of the Church, every other interest in the kingdom endorsed it without hesitation.

In the House of Lords the clergy had no lack of spokesmen, who protested bitterly against the King's demands. The levy of 1371 must have appeared to the majority of Englishmen as evidence of a new departure against the national Church, if not as a first step towards wholesale confiscation. A special tax was laid upon all lands which had come into mortmain since 1292; in addition to which the tenth already paid by the Church, from which the less wealthy benefices had hitherto been exempt, was now made of universal application.

These taxes would produce a large revenue; and though the wars sucked up money like a quicksand,

and the corrupt Court was a sponge that never ceased to absorb public funds—over and above the loans which Edward continued to contract with the Florentine money-lenders—yet the Commons were doubtless relieved by such solid contributions from the Church. It was vain for the clergy to resist, so long as they had the nation united against them.

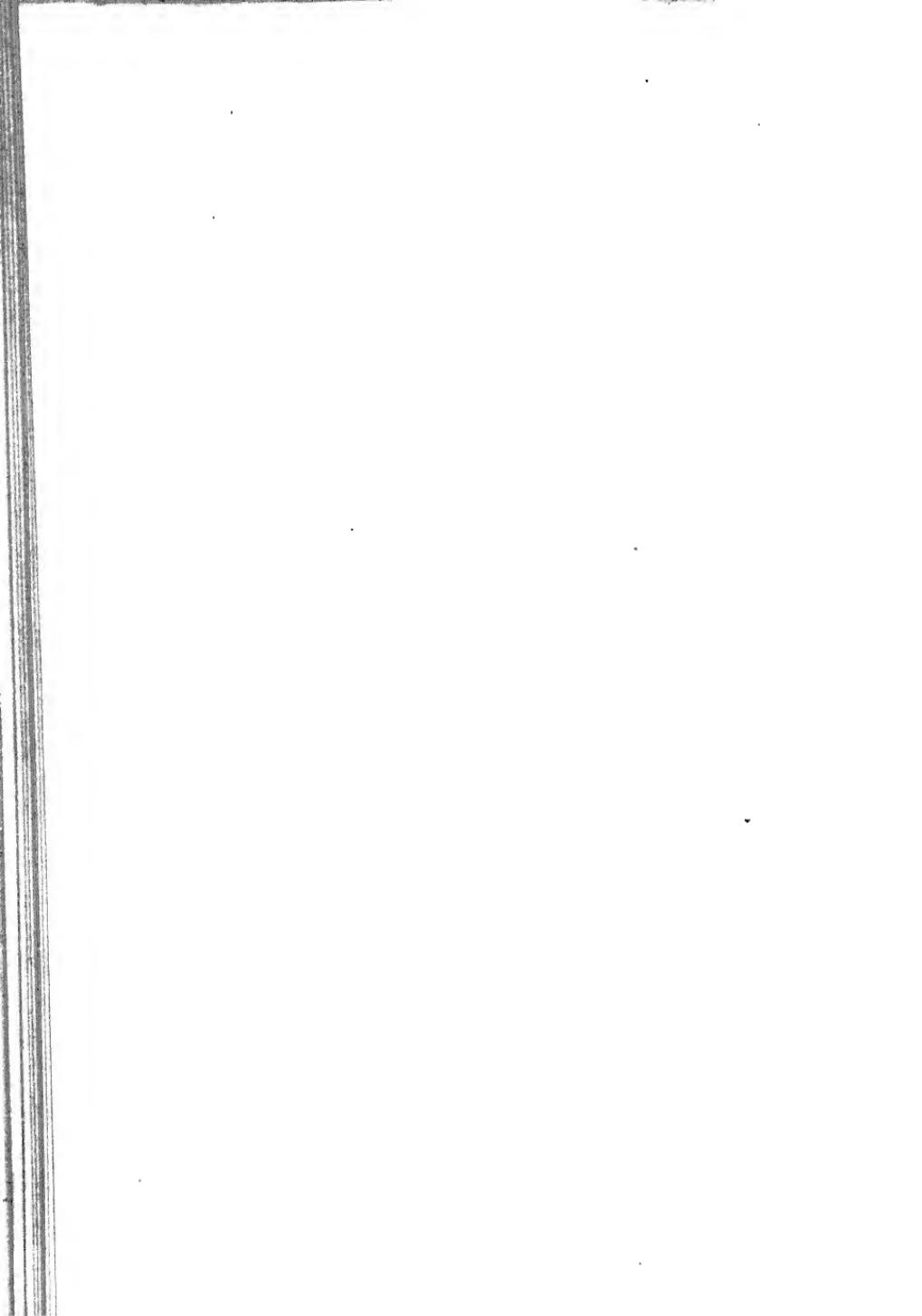
A Benedictine monk preached a sermon before the University of Oxford, protesting against the harshness of these demands, and repeating arguments for exemption which few would have gainsaid if the acquisitiveness of the Church had never passed the bounds of moderation. Wyclif took occasion to reply to this sermon; and in doing so he gives us what is probably (as Dr. Shirley says) the first published report of a speech delivered in the House of Lords.

“I heard,” he says,\* “certain religious possessors in a Parliament in London make the same demand (of exemption), and one of the lords answered by means of a fable. ‘Once on a time,’ said he, ‘the birds were gathered together, and amongst them was the owl, bare of plumage. Making himself out to be half dead and frozen, he shiveringly begged feathers from the other birds. And they, moved to pity, gave him feathers all round, until he had been decked in some ugly guise with the plumes of his fellow bipeds.’” Then a hawk suddenly appeared in the distance, and threw this assembly of fowls into a panic, and they all demanded their feathers again. “‘And when he refused them, every

\* *De Dominio Civili*, ii., ch. 1.



A BENEDICTINE MONK.



bird took back his own feather by force ; and so they escaped the danger, whilst the owl was more wretchedly callow than before. So,' said he, 'if war breaks out against us, we ought to take the temporalities from the possessioners, as being the common property of the realm, and prudently to defend our country with what is our own wealth, though in a measure superfluous.'

But if the clergy had to listen occasionally to pungent apogues of this kind, they managed to return rubber for rubber. With part of the spoils of the Church a great fleet was fitted out and placed under the command of the Earl of Pembroke. "Plenty of money" was sent with it, to engage an army of mercenaries in Poitou ; but the Spaniards fell upon this expedition off Rochelle, and annihilated it. Evidently, said the clergy, there was a curse on the plundered money ; and when the King with four of his sons attempted to take out another fleet, to restore their broken fortunes, and could not get a favourable wind until it was too late, the superstitious friends of the Church agreed that "God was on the side of the French."

The fact is that the country entered on a series of disasters at the moment when Wyclif and his friends must have been nursing their highest hopes. The illness of the Prince of Wales had forced him to return to England after the cruel massacre at Limoges. The tide of war was already turning, and under the Duke of Lancaster the English arms suffered various humiliating defeats. Portsmouth had been burned by the French in 1369, and three years

later came the terrible disgrace at Rochelle. The conquests made at Crécy and Poitiers were lost piecemeal, and a splendid English army led by Lancaster, whilst attempting to cross France from Calais to Bordeaux, was half destroyed by cold and famine. The Commons presented a petition to the monarch complaining that though, twenty years before, he had been called "the king of the sea," the English navy was now ruined by incapacity and mismanagement. Grievous taxation, direct and indirect, had been levied for the prosecution of the war, and it was shrewdly suspected that considerable sums had remained in the hands of officials. Corn was at famine prices. The whole country was discontented and enraged; the King's advisers became thoroughly unpopular, and the Government was brought into contempt.

John of Gaunt, it must be admitted, had been tried and found wanting; for though some of the mischances which fell upon him were independent of his control, he was certainly not without responsibility for the worst of them. Beginning with a strong policy, full of ambition and fire and intrigue, he was apparently one of those men who are born to make a noise in the world disproportionate to their effective power. Whether through fault or through misfortune, he failed as a general, as an administrator, and as a manager of men. Having assumed the title of King of Castile, he brought on his country the most humiliating revenges from the Spanish fleet. Having taken over the command in France from his more warlike brother, he lost thousands of men

and millions of money, and ended by pressing the French King for a truce. After defying and challenging the Papacy for many years, he found himself compelled, as the head of the English Government, to acquiesce in the virtual abandonment of his claims. Naturally a violent and overbearing man, who when he wanted to argue could only browbeat, and who is described by a contemporary as one "whose doings were ever contrary," he descended so far as to truckle and pay court to his father's mistress. Rightly or wrongly, he was accused of profiting by the embezzlement of shameless rogues in the royal household, and, when the Commons showed a disposition to inquire into the financial abuses, he withheld the parliamentary writs during the years 1374 and 1375. Never at any time very acceptable with the people or their representatives, he had now earned a full measure of odium from all classes; and he made the crowning mistake of letting himself drift into a position of rivalry with the popular Prince of Wales.

To understand and appreciate the facts connected with the Conferences at Bruges, and especially with that in which Wyclif was engaged, one must bear in mind the clear distinction between the attack on the property of the English Church and the broader and more significant assault on the papal assumptions. The first movement was a question of domestic discipline, calculated in the eyes of Wyclif and his friends to purify and re-invigorate the national Church, whilst even laymen like the Duke of Lancaster could persuade themselves that

they were doing God service by reducing the plethora from which religion so manifestly suffered in England. The other movement was one of national defence against a foreign invader, a contest having for its object the extrusion of an audacious tyranny which had been set up by aliens in the civil as well as in the spiritual domain, and one in which the strongest champions of the national Church might and did take an active part. There could be no doubt that the fight with Rome was more widely popular, or at any rate stirred up less of domestic discord, than that which converted nearly every regular and secular clergyman in the country into a centre of loquacious disaffection.

Things would probably have gone better with John of Gaunt and his friends if they had pressed the cause against Rome some years earlier. It was natural that the disasters and discredit which fell upon the country during the last few years of the reign of Edward III. should practically destroy our chance of prevailing in conference over the papal representatives. Our virtual defeat at Bruges was in a measure the outcome of our defeat in Aquitaine, at Rochelle, and at Portsmouth. Beaten on land and at sea, by Frenchmen and Spaniards, dishonoured at home by the King's inglorious old age, and so divided in counsels that no man, prince or duke or councillor, could act with sufficient authority and promptitude in the true interests of the country, we were evidently not in a position to speak at Avignon as we could have spoken five or ten years before.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CONFERENCE AT BRUGES.



LMOST everyone in England, except the alien priests and the independent monks and friars, was keenly opposed to the papal provisions, to the claim for first-fruits and *annata*—one year's revenue from the benefice conferred—and to other pretexts for the transference of English money to Avignon. The evil had been growing for many years, and it is easy to understand the satisfaction with which John Wyclif would receive his commission to go and argue the matter out with the delegates from Avignon, and to tell the representatives of the Pope that England was no longer to be his milch cow, or to pay him for the privilege of electing her own bishops and priests.

It was hardly Wyclif's fault that he could not deliver an effective message of this kind, or that, having delivered his message, he found it explained away by his colleagues, or allowed to fall to the ground for want of enforcement by the Government at home. Somewhere perhaps in the archives of the Vatican there is a record of the Conference at Bruges, in the shape of a report from the nuncios. If it could be published it would doubtless provide us with an interesting account of the arguments used on both sides, and the efforts made to arrive at an understanding. No such account has hitherto made its appearance, and we can only conclude from other indications that Wyclif spoke out freely, that Rome was more and more embittered against him from that time forward, that he greatly regretted the lame and impotent conclusion of the Conference, and that after he returned from Bruges his attitude towards Rome was more distinctly hostile.

The question of provisions was of course the most natural line of attack for anyone who wished to make an assault upon the papal assumptions. In the reign of Edward III. the English Church had in fact become a sort of Roman preserve. Not content with occasionally overriding local elections or royal nominations to bishoprics, abbacies, and benefices of every kind, the popes claimed and exercised a power to provide for vacancies before they occurred. Chapters, conventional bodies, or others in whom the right of presentation was generally vested, found themselves not unfrequently confronted with a new superior or beneficiary—very possibly an alien, who by

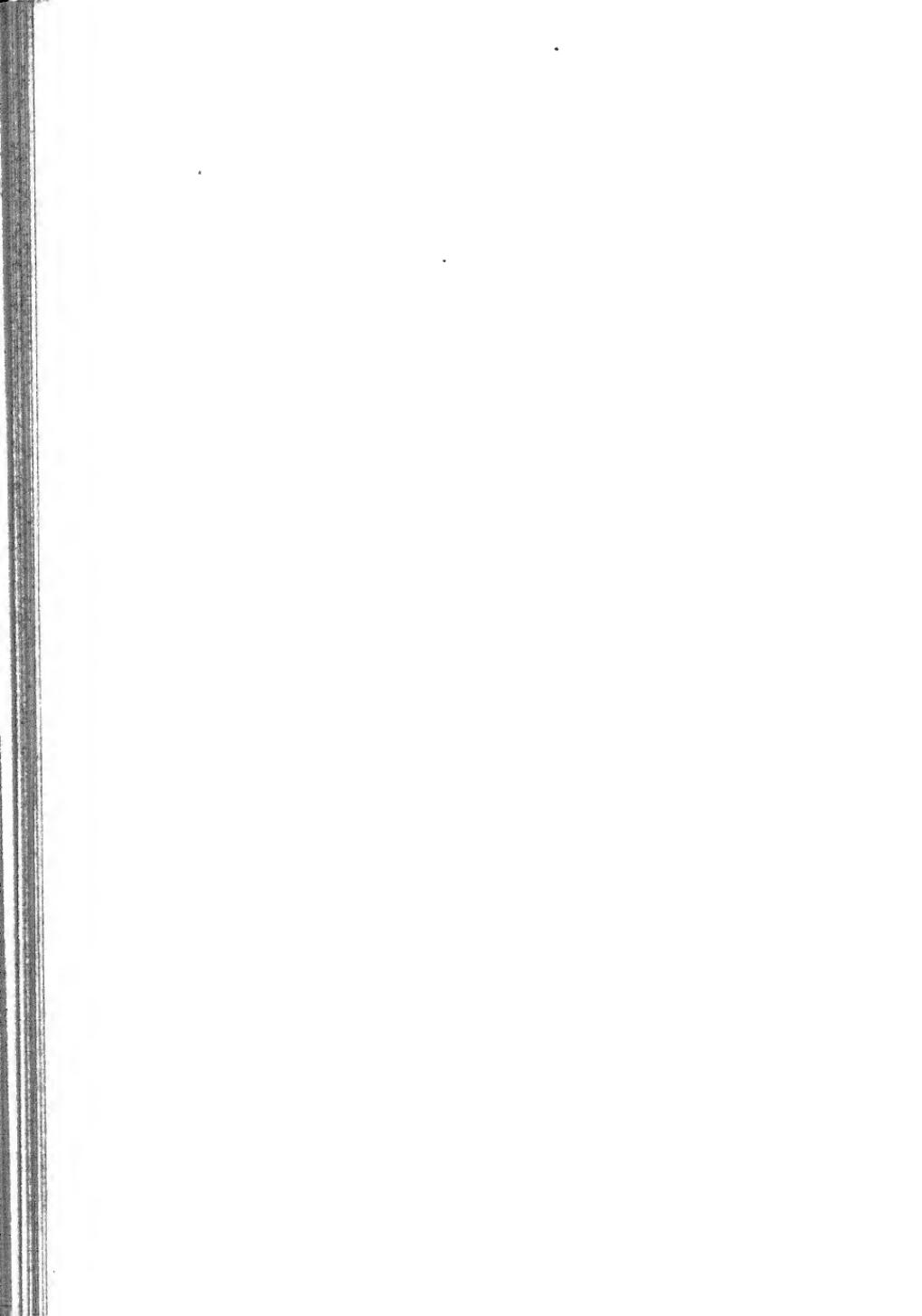


GREGORIVS  
de Belloforti Lemou  
Decemb. 1370. Sedit  
29. Ob. 27. Martij an.

XI. Petrus Rogerij  
icen. creat? die 30.  
an. 7. mens. 2. dies  
1378. Vac. Sed. d. 12.

POPE GREGORY XI.

1870-8.



influence or money had secured his nomination from the Pope, and now presented himself for election by virtue of a document signed months or years beforehand. The Pope's provisions, amounting as they often did to sheer confiscation, and liable to the very grossest abuse, were more than once denounced by Parliament as an intolerable scandal and usurpation. In the year 1343, and again in 1350, statutes were passed to restrain or debar this claim, and in 1353 the statute of *Præmunire* made it a serious crime, punishable by severe pains and penalties, to allow the Pope's writ to run in England, or to appeal from England to Avignon. But these statutes were constantly evaded, and the anti-clerical Council of 1371–1375 determined to make an effort to get rid of the abuse.

In 1373 the King sent a special mission to Avignon to discuss the matter with Pope Gregory XI., who had succeeded Urban V. in 1371. There were four members of this delegation—John Gilbert, Bishop of Bangor; William de Berton, a distinguished graduate of Oxford, resident at Merton, and subsequently Chancellor of the University; Uhtred Bolton, a monk of Dunholme, and John de Shepeye. They represented the difficulty which had been created in England by the existing irregularities of reservation, collation, and provision, especially when English clergymen were displaced by aliens. Gregory seems to have listened without replying; but it was arranged, now or subsequently, that a conference should be held in the following year at Bruges, between representatives of the Pope and of the

English King, when the whole question was to be thoroughly discussed.

Probably in order to provide trustworthy materials for this Conference, a Commission was issued by the Crown early in 1374, charged to inquire into and secure an exact return of all benefices and dignities throughout the kingdom in the hands of Italians, Frenchmen, or other aliens, with their names, incumbents, and yearly value. The return was willingly furnished by the bishops, and it was sent in to the Chancellor's court. The figures are said to have caused a good deal of surprise to those who had not realised how far the alienation of English benefices had already proceeded.

Two Conferences at Bruges had been arranged for about the same time. England had asked the Pope, or at any rate had concurred in inviting him, to settle the terms of an armistice in Europe; and for this purpose Gregory sent his legate to preside over a meeting between John of Gaunt and the Earl of Salisbury, representing England, and the Dukes of Anjou and Burgundy. A year's cessation of arms was agreed upon in June, 1375; and the Duke of Lancaster was instantly twitted at home with having begged for peace after being beaten in the field.

The ecclesiastics had been waiting for the politicians to finish. They were originally appointed to meet on St. John Baptist's Day, 1374, and it was not until the beginning of August, 1375, that the Commissioners were able to set to work. The Commission included Gilbert of Bangor, who had been to Avignon in 1373; Dr. John Wyclif, professor of

theology; John Guter, Dean of Sechow; Simon de Multon, doctor of laws; William de Berton, Robert Bealknap, and John de Henyngton. The Pope was represented by three nuncios—Bernard, Bishop of Pampeluna; Ladulph, Bishop of Senigaglia, and Sancho, Provincial of Valenza.

The position of Wyclif in connection with this special embassy may be defined with greater clearness than would otherwise be possible by means of an extract from the Exchequer accounts of the year 1375. The entry supplies "details of the settlement of Master John Wycliff, professor of theology, in respect of his travelling and other expenses on a royal embassy in the parts of Flanders, for the transaction of the King's business therein, during the forty-eighth year of the reign." Wyclif "accounts for 60 l. received personally from the exchequer on 31 July"—possibly at the port of embarkation. "From 27 July, in the year 48, on which day he set out from London for Flanders, to 4 September, when he returned, namely 50 days at 20s. a day—50 l.; and for crossing and re-crossing the sea, 42s. 3d. Expended, 52 l. 2s. 3d. Credit, 7 l. 17s. 9d."

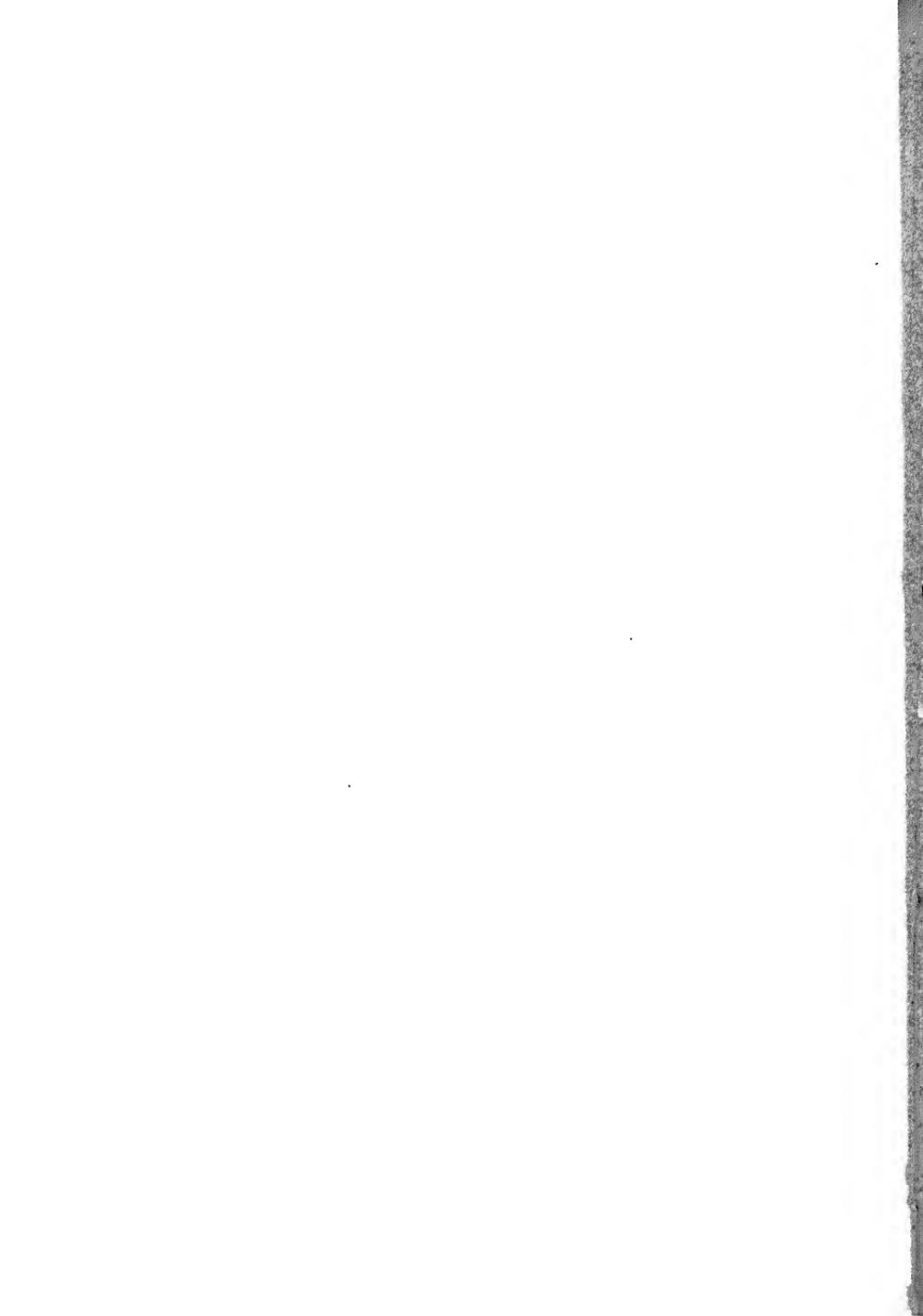
Other entries in the same accounts show that John of Gaunt, on an embassy to Flanders in 1364, received one hundred shillings a day; Sir Henry le Scrope, on another mission, had an allowance of forty shillings; and Reginald Newport, despatched on the King's business in the jubilee year, was paid at the rate of thirteen shillings and fourpence a day. Wyclif's treatment, therefore, seems to have been fairly liberal, but it can hardly be regarded as exceptionally hand-

some for a Royal Commissioner. In the first year of Edward's reign the Bishop of Worcester, who was sent to Avignon in order to secure a dispensation for the marriage of the young King to Philippa, received an allowance of five marks a day for 299 days. The value of money was higher in 1327 than in 1375, and the treatment of this bishop must have been at least three times and a half as good as that of Wyclif.

The negotiations ended in an unfortunate compromise. It was agreed that the Pope should desist from making reservations of benefices in England, but only on condition that the English King should no longer confer benefices by his writ of *quare impedit*. Evidently the whole question was left unsettled. Even if both parties had acted upon this agreement, which they did not, more harm than good would have been done. Englishmen had hoped to see the authority of the monarch in his own kingdom vindicated, and admitted by the Pope's delegates; but instead of this there was a formal limitation of his authority, and nothing had been effected to establish the rights of chapters and other ecclesiastical patrons. It is true that claims were made, then or subsequently, that the Pope had given way on other points, and that the nuncios had pledged him by word of mouth to abstain from certain acts to which the English Commissioners had taken exception. It is also possible that minor points were reserved at Bruges, and settled at leisure in the course of 1376; for in the Parliament of the following year (when the "King's friends" were in power again) mention was



QUEEN PHILIPPA, CONSORT OF EDWARD III.  
FROM A PORTRAIT IN THE HALL OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.



made of other concessions on Gregory's part, though there was no formal document to show for them, and nothing which could be held to bind future popes. These alleged concessions were to the effect that the Pope would not take action with regard to vacant sees until a free election had been made ; that he would abate his demands in the matter of first-fruits ; and that he would use moderation in respect of provisions and the nomination of aliens. Granting the genuineness of these concessions, it is clear that matters were not much mended by them.

It may well occur to a man of plain ideas and common sense at the present time that the despatch of the mission to Bruges was something of a mistake. What was expected of it ? Surely not the voluntary consent of Rome to forgo the advantages which she had usurped and enjoyed for many years. The journey to Bruges was a sign of weakness, or at any rate a mark of concession in a matter which, logically considered, left no room for concession.

There was one course which the English Government might have adopted—which, in fact, it had begun to adopt, and which only called for steady resolution and persistence. If the King, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Lancaster, with the Chancellor and Treasurer, supported by the barons, knights, and burgesses—if, that is to say, the Royal Council and the Parliament had been determined to put an end to papal provisions in England, they might have done so by enforcing the laws already on the statute book, leaving the “French popes” to say what they liked, and never going back upon their word. That

The commissionership was an honourable appointment. The Pope had asked King Edward to send to Bruges "*claros scientia ac laudandae virtutis, et cuncta prudentia praeditos, cultores justitiae, sedulosque pacis et concordiae zelatores.*" It was no small thing to have been designated in response to such an invitation; but, so far as temporal advantage was concerned, Wyclif was not much the richer by his journey to Flanders. He had been presented by the Crown to the living of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire —of the annual value of £26—some months before the Commission was nominated. Of course he would have to make provision for the superintendence of the parish during his absence, and, as his expenses at Bruges must have been considerable, this would swallow up nearly as much as he could have saved out of his allowance. There was indeed no grudging of rewards amongst the Commissioners on their return. The Bishop of Bangor was promoted to the see of Hereford, vacated in 1375 by Courtenay's translation to London. Berton was placed on another Commission, and afterwards became Chancellor of Oxford. Wyclif was nominated on November 6th to the prebend of Aust, in the cathedral church of Westbury, in the diocese of Worcester. It would have been in keeping with the ordinary clerical morality of the day if he had enjoyed the fruits of this appointment, and of as many more sinecures as his patron Lancaster might have obtained for him. But his past utterances had made it impossible for him to become a pluralist, and so the prebend was refused. Less than a fortnight after

his nomination we find that it was granted to another.

The discontent of Englishmen had meanwhile come to a head; and at last the group which had held office up to 1370, and which had been dismissed by royal ordinance following on a parliamentary petition, secured another chance of directing the affairs of the nation. John of Gaunt had neglected to have Parliament summoned since November, 1373; but his elder brother, always the most authoritative of his father's subjects, though never a politician, and now fast approaching his end, caused the writs to be issued at the beginning of 1376. There could be no question as to the temper of the men who would be returned to these writs. The new House of Commons represented by a great majority not merely the grievances due to over-taxation and the widespread misery of the country, but also the indignation caused by Lancaster's attempt to limit the privileges of Parliament, the disgust of Englishmen at the two inglorious compacts at Bruges, and a determination to put an end to the open scandals of the Court.

The old official group, with Bishop Wykeham at their head, and recruited by a still stronger man in Bishop Courtenay, now returned to power; and before the session came to an end a Committee of barons and bishops was appointed to share the responsibility of the leaders in the Commons—an arrangement manifestly contributing (so far as it goes) to the development of the Cabinet as distinguished from the holders of particular offices of

during the previous five or six years. They went to the House of Lords to prefer their demand, headed by Peter de la Mare, Speaker of the Commons. Lancaster greeted them in a rather uproarious mood. "What do these base and low-born knights attempt?" he cried. "Do they take themselves for kings and princes of the land?" But though he stormed and raged, threatening all who opposed him with the vengeance of the Crown, the protection of the Prince of Wales was sufficient to maintain the authority of the Commons. Lancaster was discreet enough to keep away from the meetings of the Council, and for a time the representatives of the people had their own way.

De la Mare seems to have had the courage of a Lenthall. When the customary request for a subsidy came before the Commons in the name of the monarch, the Speaker replied that "the King needed not the substance of his poor subjects, if he were well and faithfully governed; which he offered to prove effectually, and promised that if it were found that the King had need, his subjects should be ready most gladly to help him according to their power." This Peter de la Mare was a man of considerable personal influence. He was steward to the Earl of March, who had married the daughter of Lionel of Clarence. Probably also he was a near relative to Thomas de la Mare, the powerful Abbot of St. Alban's. Nothing could be more natural than his nomination as Speaker to a Parliament in which the Prince of Wales and the clericals had the upper hand.

Unhappily—for our sympathy with Wyclif cannot constrain us to sympathy with his arrogant patron, at any rate against the Parliament of 1376—the Prince of Wales died on the 8th of June, leaving a boy of eleven as heir-apparent to the Crown. The House of Commons did not allow itself to be demoralised by the sudden removal of its main supporter near the throne, nor did the “King’s friends” venture to undo the work of the popular Prince whilst he was yet fresh in his grave. The session ran its average course, and Parliament was not dismissed for thirty-one days. The Commons requested that the young Prince should be brought in evidence before them—a constitutional act, yet doubtless intended as a hint for the Duke of Lancaster. They held on their way, and completed the petitions on which they had been engaged, to the number of one hundred and forty; and then, probably with much misgiving, the knights and burgesses went home.

Parliament had not long been dispersed when John of Gaunt resumed his old place in the Council, and dismissed under a royal warrant the Committee of Lords above mentioned. The banished courtiers were recalled, including Lord Latimer and Alice Perrers; Sir Peter de la Mare was thrown into prison; the Bishop of Winchester was deprived of his temporalities, and the acts of the Good Parliament were declared null and void. In due time a new Parliament was summoned, and Lancaster so worked upon the sheriffs, who had the nomination of the knights, as well as great influence over the freeholders, that scarcely a single member of the packed House

of 1377 had a word to say against his arbitrary conduct.

During the session of this Parliament Edward III., who had celebrated the jubilee of his birth by formally recognising English as the national language, celebrated the jubilee of his accession to the throne by a general pardon; but John of Gaunt contrived that the Bishop of Winchester should be excluded by name from the benefits of the proclamation. A story which was current at the time, or not long afterwards, professed to give a personal (and perhaps it would have been an adequate) reason for the relentless animosity with which the Duke of Lancaster pursued the disgraced Bishop. William of Wykeham is said to have declared that Queen Philippa had told him on her death-bed how, when she was confined at Ghent in 1340, she had given birth to a daughter, and had overlain it in the night. Fearful of her husband's anger, he being absent at the time, she had substituted a boy for the dead child. This boy, according to the Bishop, or to the inventor of the fable, was the wrong-headed and obstreperous John of Gaunt, who had manifestly been born for a Flemish burgher, and not for an English prince.

Unquestionably if such a story reached the Duke of Lancaster's ears, it might account for his hatred of Wykeham. Of course it cannot be accepted, for various and sufficient reasons. Chaucer has been quoted as an authority for the light in which the overlying of children was regarded in those days; for he says in *The Parson's Tale* that "if a woman by negligence

overlyeth her child in her sleeping, it is homicide and deadly sin." And a bishop who had confessed his queen, and shrived her of such a sin—especially a high-minded bishop like William of Wykeham—would be most unlikely to repeat the story in order to serve his private ends.

Though the Good Parliament had had so short an existence, and its work was overruled as soon as it had been dissolved, there can be no question of its importance as a landmark of constitutional history. It is important also from our immediate point of view; for one cannot but be startled to find a man like Wyclif, irreproachable in his moral character, whose every act reveals a roused and wakeful conscience, engaged in public affairs on the side of a man so incongruous, unsympathetic, and unpopular, as John of Gaunt. Nothing, indeed, could testify more eloquently to the high character and spotless reputation of Wyclif than the fact that his political association with Lancaster, and indirectly with Alice Perrers and the peculators of the royal household, did not cover his name with a cloud of suspicion and obloquy. The very worst that has been said of him, apart from his heretical opinions, is the accusation that he became a heretic from selfish and vindictive motives ; and we shall see that there is no reasonable ground whatever on which a charge of this kind could be based.

It is true that he suffered severely by meddling with political affairs, as many a man of spiritual fervour and lofty enthusiasm, committing his bark to that treacherous sea, has suffered since his time.

So long as Lancaster was really powerful, whilst the King was yet capable of personal intervention in public life, and the Prince of Wales held the enemies of his brother in check, Wyclif also was safe under the protection of the Court. But when the Prince was dead, when the King was dying amidst contempt and neglect, and when Lancaster's accumulated failures and overbearing conduct had made the populace actively and openly hostile to him, the animosity of the clerics against Wyclif could no longer be restrained. His persecution by the Church authorities began in 1377; but the machinery of persecution was set in motion early in 1376, at the very time when John of Gaunt had retired from the royal Council, and before it seemed probable that the Duke would speedily regain his power.

A new and striking figure now appears upon the stage. Courtenay was the prominent champion of the orthodoxy of his day; and, in order that we may have a clear perception of the events in which Wyclif and Courtenay enacted the leading parts, it may be well to glance backwards at the internal history of the English Church, and at the character of its principal rulers, since Wyclif began to attract the notice of his contemporaries.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### WYCLIF AND THE NATIONAL CHURCH.



ROM the death of Bradwardine onwards, the line of English primates — Islip, Langham, Whittlesey, Sudbury, Courtenay — became more and more closely associated with the political movements of the day, as indeed could not well have been avoided in that critical epoch of the Christian Church.

Bradwardine was a Schoolman and a student, as well as a man of affairs. His friends must have had fairly good hope, on his nomination by the King in 1349, that his term of office would be marked by more than ordinary independence and vigour. He had distinguished himself at Oxford by the part which he took in opposing the extravagant claims of an Italian archdeacon, Cardinal de Mora, who,

not content with sending a deputy to make as much money as possible out of the post, coolly assumed authority over the university. Something has already been said of Bradwardine's liberal opinions, and it is not surprising that he should have been out of favour at Avignon. At Edward's request, Clement VI. had backed his nomination by a bull of provision, and he pettishly declared that, if the English King asked him to make a bishop out of a jackass, he could not refuse. This was soon after the battle of Crécy and the taking of Calais, when Edward was practically supreme in France as well as in England. The new Archbishop was entertained by Clement at a banquet, on the day of his consecration, and one of the cardinals thought it a good jest to send a donkey into the banqueting hall, with a man on his back who prayed that the quadruped might be made Archbishop of Canterbury. The insult was resented even by the Pope, and it was certainly not calculated to improve the relations between the English Primate and the Papal Court. But the plague cut short a most promising career, before Bradwardine had had an opportunity of showing his mettle as a ruler of men.

Simon Islip, who had been one of the King's secretaries—a fairly safe channel of ecclesiastical promotion in those days,—was a "doctor of decretals," that is to say, of the canon law, and a man of inexhaustible energy. He was appointed by Clement in the same manner as his two predecessors, by a bull couched in terms which probably did something to hasten the passing of the statute of Provisors—"per

*provisionem apostolicam, spreta electione facta de eo."* The Pope snapped his fingers at the election by the chapter, but he took care to nominate the same man whom they had elected, and whom the King had recommended, in the case of Islip as well as in that of Bradwardine.

If Clement's bull was arrogantly worded, Edward had himself to thank, for he had actually begged the Pope to override the first election of Bradwardine by a bull of provision. And it may be pointed out by way of parenthesis that if papal provisions had not been profitable to the Crown in more ways than one, and if the Crown had not varied its protests against them by occasionally turning them to account, they might have been abolished out of hand. It suited the King, moreover, to keep in reserve this check upon the power of the English clergy, and we may somewhat question the anxiety of Edward and his friends to dispense altogether with the advantage of a timely resort to Rome. The statute of Provisors was passed by Parliament in the second year of Islip's primacy, and it was followed two years later by the statute of Præmunire. It has already been mentioned that neither statute was immediately effective; provisions and reservations went on, to the scandal of all good churchmen, for generations to come.

Islip came to Canterbury at a critical moment. The ever memorable visitation of the plague in 1349 and the following years—a visitation by which (we are asked to believe) as many as one quarter of the human race was cut off within four years: one half of the population of England in little over a year:

one hundred thousand in London alone—produced new outbursts of religious enthusiasm, and contributed largely to the moral and intellectual development of the fourteenth century. The Black Death was the benefactor of society which it dissolved, and of humanity which it decimated. The plague of boils on man, the deadly murrain amongst cattle, the bloody spectacles of the Flagellants—all were on the side of free thought and the free expression of thought, for all encouraged counsels of perfection. There was enough already to set in motion the slowly grinding mills of God, from which even the fourteenth century began to witness the production of a new learning and a reformed religion. None of the older Schoolmen whose minds had restlessly stirred themselves in sleep—no timid student of Marsiglio and Ockham, plunged into a musing fit by reading those daring tomes, about the time when John Wyclif was conning his grammar at Oxford—could have dreamed that the mighty Church of Pius and Boniface would so accumulate its blunders and crimes at Avignon as to play the whole game into the hands of the heretics, and to render the disruption of Christendom finally inevitable. And surely one of the worst crimes of the Papacy throughout this blundering century was to exact, as Clement did, the jubilee pilgrimage to Rome in the midst of the most horrible pestilence on record, in order that he might win his expected sacks of gold at the cost of something like a million human lives. The Franciscans alone reckoned as many as thirty thousand deaths in consequence of this enforced pilgrimage.

Making every deduction for exaggeration and miscounting, it is plain that a very large number of the priests, as well as of their congregations, died of the successive plagues which visited England in the fourteenth century. Amongst other evils which resulted from the wholesale mortality, hundreds of parishes were robbed of spiritual guidance, or deserted by their pastors when they were in special need of help. Hence the passage in Langland's *Vision*, written perhaps after the second plague (1361) :

" Parsons and parish priests  
Plaineth to their bishops  
That their parish hath been poor  
Since the pestilence,  
And asketh leave and license  
At London to dwell,  
And sing for simony—  
For silver is sweet."

The Archbishop did his best to cope with this evil, and to convince the priests that it was part of their duty to suffer with their people. He also took the sensible course of ordaining many poor survivors of the plague who had lost their family and friends, their heart and hope, sending them into the deserted parishes. And that they might have a rule of life beforehand, and know what their new vocation meant, he "did ordain that more should not be given to priests for their yearly stipend than three pounds six shillings and eightpence, which"—Stow laconically adds—"caused many of them to steal."

Three pounds six-and-eightpence! Multiply the sum by ten, to get a rough comparison with what

that would mean in our own days, and it would seem that Islip's poor priests were not even passing rich on forty pounds a year.

It is a question how far these humble missionaries put into Wyclif's head the idea of his russet priests. At any rate it was in the same field that he was subsequently moved to labour.

Islip gave many signs of his ability as an administrator; and the manner in which he dealt with the Flagellants is worth mentioning on this ground alone. For a time these curious products of physical suffering and spiritual elation convulsed the minds of many devoted men, in England as well as on the continent. The history of these fanatics is very much the same as that of irregular religious demonstrations in all ages. There were the same ecstasies, the same ability to endure pain, the same conviction that endurance would be accounted to them for righteousness, the same aggressive bearing, which excited indignation and persecution. Persecution, too, had its usual effect in fostering what it tried to exterminate. Only phlegmatic England, of all the western nations of Europe, escaped lightly from this epidemic of purely human origin. It was condemned in a bull from the Pope, who called on the different monarchs to take measures for its repression. To this message Edward paid no attention, and the Archbishop as little as possible. So far as England was concerned, the Flagellants may be said to have been tolerated out of existence.

Some of the last acts of Islip's life—the foundation of Canterbury Hall at Oxford, the exclusion of

the monks at the end of 1365, and the appointment of one John Wyclif, a secular priest, as Warden—have generally been connected with the biography of the Reformer, with which they have probably nothing to do. It seems to have been the Vicar of Mayfield, not the Rector of Fillingham, who was Warden of Canterbury Hall in 1365, was removed by Archbishop Langham, appealed unsuccessfully to the Pope, and lost his case in the King's Court in 1372. The considerations which identify the warden with Wyclif of Mayfield are in themselves almost strong enough to be conclusive; but, when we remember what Wyclif the Reformer was doing between 1365 and 1372, it is difficult to imagine that the old Master of Balliol was occupied during seven years in fighting for this additional honour and emolument.\*

Simon Langham, who succeeded Islip in 1366, was a Benedictine monk, who had been successively prior, abbot, treasurer, Bishop of Ely, and chancellor in what we may call for convenience the ministries of 1363–1366, when Wykeham was Keeper of the Seal. He was naturally a wealthy man, and had had time

\* One of the biographers of Wyclif, maintaining that the Canterbury Hall story must refer to him, is convinced that it could not refer to John Wycliffe of Mayfield because the latter held his living continuously from before 1365 until after 1372. He apparently forgot that the Reformer also was beneficed during the whole of that time. The notion of Wyclif as a pugnacious and baffled pluralist is too absurd to be accepted. It is impossible to think of him resigning the mastership of Balliol for a poor country living, then fighting for Canterbury Hall, and then again refusing the prebend of Aust, all within thirteen or fourteen years. Dr. Shirley has a note on "The Two John Wyclifs," in the Appendix to his edition of the *Fasciculi*.

to forget any strong prejudices which he may have formed in favour of the Pope or the Orders in his younger days. If it had been possible for the Pope to override his election, he would probably have done so, for Langham had been a Minister of the Crown when the statutes of Provisors and Præmunire were passed, and Chancellor when Wyclif was called upon to argue against the payment of tribute to Rome.

It is not surprising that the old monk should have shown scant favour to the friars; but his action in regard to Canterbury Hall shows that at any rate he had not ceased to believe in the virtues and merits of the Benedictines. He has been described as a pugnacious prelate. A well-known reference to him by Lord Campbell, in his *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, is worth quoting again, if only as an illustration of the perplexities which have beset everyone who ventured too lightly amongst the details of Wyclif's career. Campbell tells us that "among those with whom (Langham) quarrelled at Canterbury was the famous John Wyclif, then a student at the college there erected by Islip, his predecessor. The ardent youth being unjustly expelled, and finding no redress for the wrong he suffered, turned his mind to Church usurpations, and prepared the way for the Reformation which blessed an after age."

Langham made his peace with Rome, and received the cardinal's hat in 1368. He ought to have known that his acceptance of this honour would at once make him a suspect with the English Court, if not with the English Church. At any rate it lost him

the Primacy. The King seized his temporalities, and sent a *congé d'éire* to Canterbury, with a recommendation to elect William Whittlesey, a nephew of Simon Islip, who held the position for the next six years without making much of a mark on his generation. Of Simon Sudbury, who succeeded him (1375-1381) it would not be altogether correct to say the same thing; but, so far as he came directly into touch with Wyclif, he is overshadowed by the stronger personality of Courtenay. It will suffice to speak of his primacy hereafter, in connection with the proceedings which were taken against Wyclif on the charge of heresy.

William Courtenay was the fourth son of Hugh Courtenay, Earl of Devon, who had married Margaret Bohun, granddaughter of Edward I. He was thus allied in blood both to the Prince and to the Princess of Wales; and, when his parents destined their boy to the secular priesthood, no doubt they anticipated, or knew that they could guarantee, his rapid rise to the highest ecclesiastical dignities. According to Dean Hook, in his *Lives of the Archbishops*, Courtenay was actuated more by partisanship than by principle. At all events he was before everything the political prelate, ambitious and haughty, a natural leader of men, stepping at once to the front rank of English churchmen, and claiming to be recognised as a champion of the national Church. At the age of twenty-five (in 1367) he was made Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and did good service in resisting the claim of the Bishop of Lincoln to appoint to that office.

From the family records it appears that he was one of the earlier Knights of the Garter.

The future *malleus hæretorum* was already at Oxford the hammer of recalcitrant friars. Before his election to the chancellorship the friars had given the university a great deal of trouble, claiming to be outside its authority, not only for themselves but even for the students whom they sheltered in their houses. The same difficulty arose at Cambridge; and both the friars and the universities carried their quarrel to the Archbishop and to the King—to the former, apparently, before he had resigned his chancellorship of the kingdom into the hands of Wykeham. As a result it was ordered in the King's name that henceforth no scholar should be received into the houses of any of the four mendicant Orders—Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, or Augustinians—under the age of eighteen; that the friars should not produce any new bull from the Pope, or take advantage of any old one, in their controversies with the universities; and that any future difference between the parties should be decided in the King's Court, without further appeal to Rome—which, indeed, would be an offence against the statute of *Præmunire*.

Wyclif and Courtenay were associated in this dispute against the Orders, which left rankling memories in the minds of all concerned. It was natural that Courtenay's election should have been stoutly resisted by the friars, who were by no means prepared to obey the monition which had been addressed to them. They even went so far as to

cite the head of the University to appear before the Pope; but Wykeham and Langham took prompt action, and secured the quashing of the citation.

At twenty-seven Courtenay became Bishop of Hereford, a bull being obtained from Rome to cover the irregularity in point of age. He soon made his name known in Convocation, where in 1373 he protested vigorously against the heavy taxation of the Church both by the State and by the Pope. The latter had made a levy of a hundred thousand florins on the English clergy, and it must be admitted that the double burden was too heavy to be borne. Courtenay stiffened the resolution of his colleagues by "rising in anger and loudly declaring that neither he nor any of the clergy in his diocese would give anything until the King found a remedy for the evils from which the Church suffered." John of Gaunt wanted nothing better at the moment than such a declaration; and it was soon after this incident that the mission to Avignon was despatched. Convocation agreed to pay one-tenth to the King on condition that "the intolerable yoke of the Pope" should be lifted from their necks; and it was then that Bishop Gilbert and his colleagues were nominated. The easement of the Church in respect of papal exactions must in fairness be set off against the unsatisfactory results of the mission and subsequent Conference in the matter of reservations and provisions.

Courtenay's consecration as bishop had coincided with the exclusion of ecclesiastics from the higher political offices. When Sudbury was made Archbishop

of Canterbury in 1375, the young Bishop of Hereford was promoted to London, and in the following year he was appointed a member of the committee of Lords who were associated with the leaders of the Commons during the term of the Good Parliament. From this time forward he was in sharp antagonism with the Duke of Lancaster, and through him (apart from any question of orthodoxy) with John Wyclif.

It was impossible that two strongly aggressive natures like those of Lancaster and Courtenay should be thrown together in public life without coming sooner or later into conflict ; and their quarrel was doubtless none the less bitter because both of them had Plantagenet blood in their veins. In his political action and sympathies Courtenay was probably, to the best of his judgment, patriotic and loyal to the core. At Oxford, as we have seen, he fought splendidly for his university, and with special gusto against the friars who owned allegiance to Rome. As an ecclesiastic he fought still more splendidly for the English Church against the two tyrannies (as he could not but think them) which threatened to crush out her life. No cause could have a stronger, a more determined and undaunted champion ; and it is evident that in dignity and courtesy he can well bear comparison with John of Gaunt in his excitable youth. Two examples of his force of character recorded by his biographers—one telling as much against him as the other tells to his credit—may be repeated here because they show how his disagreement with the Duke was aggravated at a critical moment, and because

they are not without a bearing on the subsequent events of Wyclif's life.

Towards the close of the year 1376, Gregory XI., who had a quarrel with the people of Florence, conceived the idea of bringing them to their senses by excommunicating all Florentines without distinction wherever they might be found. He issued a bull to this effect, and declaring those against whom he had launched the thunders of heaven incapable of possessing any property. Now the introduction of this bull into England was a violation of recent statutes, and equally illegal was the conduct of Courtenay in taking it to Paul's Cross and commanding it to the turbulent citizens. The citizens of London were already inflamed against all the foreigners in England, whether Italian priests, German Esterlings, Dutch weavers, or Florentine merchants and money-lenders. They wanted no stronger inducement than that which their Bishop had given them; they sacked the houses of the Florentines, and in the riot which ensued they were not very careful to establish beforehand the nationality of their victims. The city authorities—it may well have been that Richard Whittington was amongst them—had to suppress the riot; and they would probably be in sympathy with the Florentine merchants, as the Court and the royal Council undoubtedly were.

It was just at this juncture that Lancaster had recovered his influence in the Council. He was supreme for the moment, and he let the Bishop know it. Courtenay had subjected himself to the penalties of Præmunire by acting on the Pope's bull; but

he was too highly placed to be proceeded against according to the strict letter of the law. He was, however, compelled to eat his words, and he sent a deputy to Paul's Cross to announce that his action in the matter had been misunderstood.

The other incident, which occurred soon afterwards, at the meeting of Convocation in February, 1377, presents the fiery prelate in a more amiable light. The Crown had omitted to send a writ to the Bishop of Winchester. Courtenay protested indignantly against the treatment of Wykeham—who had served the King long and faithfully in many capacities—and induced Convocation to refuse to consider the demand for a subsidy until the Bishop should receive his summons and take his seat. It was a Roland for Lancaster's Oliver. The Duke was obliged to give way, and Wykeham was re-instated. The monk of St. Alban's already quoted says that the Bishop secured his pardon by appealing to and bribing Alice Perrers. But the monks were often prejudiced against ecclesiastics, and this story is evidently superfluous, if not incredible.

Clearly, then, there was no love lost between the Duke and his cousin.

It is worthy of mention that Wyclif himself was in some measure hostile to William of Wykeham, if not actually in accord with Lancaster on this point. Speaking in one of his sermons against the meddling of ecclesiastics in matters of State, he complained that “benefices, instead of being bestowed on poor clerks, are heaped on a kitchen clerk, or one wise in building castles, or in worldly business.” Now

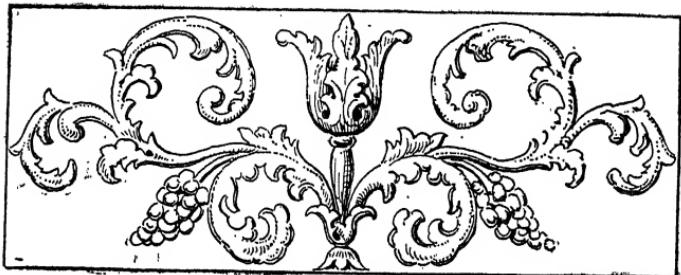
Wykeham, before he received his mitre, had been surveyor of works and architect at Windsor, and secretary to the King, in addition to holding sundry pieces of preferment in the Church. Wyclif, as a declared enemy to pluralists, and to ecclesiastics who grew wealthy by dividing the trust-funds of the Church, would have been inconsistent if he had not blamed Wykeham amongst the rest—or amongst the very first. But there is no other evidence of serious or personal animosity between these two men, whom their countrymen for ample reasons have so long agreed to honour.

Nevertheless, there is one kind of honour for churchmen who refuse their share in the trust-funds, preferring a life of apostolic poverty in order that they may preach the gospel by example as well as by precept, and another kind of honour for such as take what comes to them, perhaps restoring the bulk of it in their own time and manner. Wykeham was a magnificent founder and benefactor, to whom students of all succeeding ages have been largely indebted. Yet Stow, on the authority of Walsingham, says that in 1365, when he was made Archdeacon of Lincoln and Keeper of the Seal, Wykeham was already Provost of Wells, incumbent of a benefice in Devonshire, and the holder of no fewer than twelve prebends. In the same year, on the death of Bishop Edington of Winchester, he was made "general administrator of spiritual and temporal things pertaining to the bishopric." The Duke of Bourbon was at that time a prisoner in English hands; and, as the Pope was more easily approachable from

France than from England, King Edward was induced to agree to an arrangement whereby the Duke went to Avignon, secured the nomination of Wykeham for Winchester, and so "earned his deliverance." By this transaction the King netted twenty thousand francs, and the pluralist became a bishop.

The story may have reached us in a distorted shape, and it must be accepted for what it may be worth. But Wyclif knew what he was talking about when he spoke of the heaping of benefices on rich men, whilst the poor clerks starved—or stole. And it may be mentioned, by the way, that Courtenay himself was a confirmed pluralist.





## CHAPTER IX.

### PERSECUTION.



ROM Courtenay, it is evident, Wyclif would have little to expect save a stern and uncompromising opposition. The young aristocrat from the West of England, ever conscious of the royal blood in his veins, the haughty prelate whose proud bearing and intellectual vigour overawed bishops old enough to be his father, found little in common with the simple gentleman's son from the North. Courtenay has been described as a patriotic and anti-papal Englishman, and so no doubt in a sense he was. But his qualified hostility to the papal assumptions is not to be compared with the vehement antagonism of Wyclif in his later years. Courtenay, as we have seen, was ready enough to accept the mandate of Rome

where it did not imply the humiliation or impoverishment of the English Church. Wyclif would make no terms with the Papacy, which for him was (at its worst) antichrist and anathema. Both were staunch to a lofty ideal of the national Church of England; but they differed enormously in the model which they set up—differed by a space as wide as that which separates the barefooted apostle from the purple-clad prince of a dominant church.

Express complaints against Wyclif's teaching had reached the bishops, as well as the Papal Court at Avignon, soon after the Conference of Bruges. Of course it is not meant to imply that the bold doctrines of the Oxford Schoolman and lecturer in divinity were generally held to be sound up to 1376, and were recognised as heretical afterwards. His accusers were ready enough at the last-named date with a score of faulty instances, gleaned from his writings, sermons, and university lectures during the preceding years. No one becomes suddenly or accidentally a heretic; and the Oxford friars, who certainly hated Wyclif since 1366, if not earlier, had been taking notes of his teaching in anticipation of a day when they might find an orthodox corrector of his heresies. And they found such a corrector in the Chancellor whom they had attempted to hale to Rome, and whose authority they had defied.

Wyclif's heterodoxy, we cannot doubt, was an old affair—perhaps as old as his first association with John of Gaunt. But the actual persecution of “the Evangelical Doctor” began after the papal nuncios at Bruges had had an opportunity of hearing his incisive

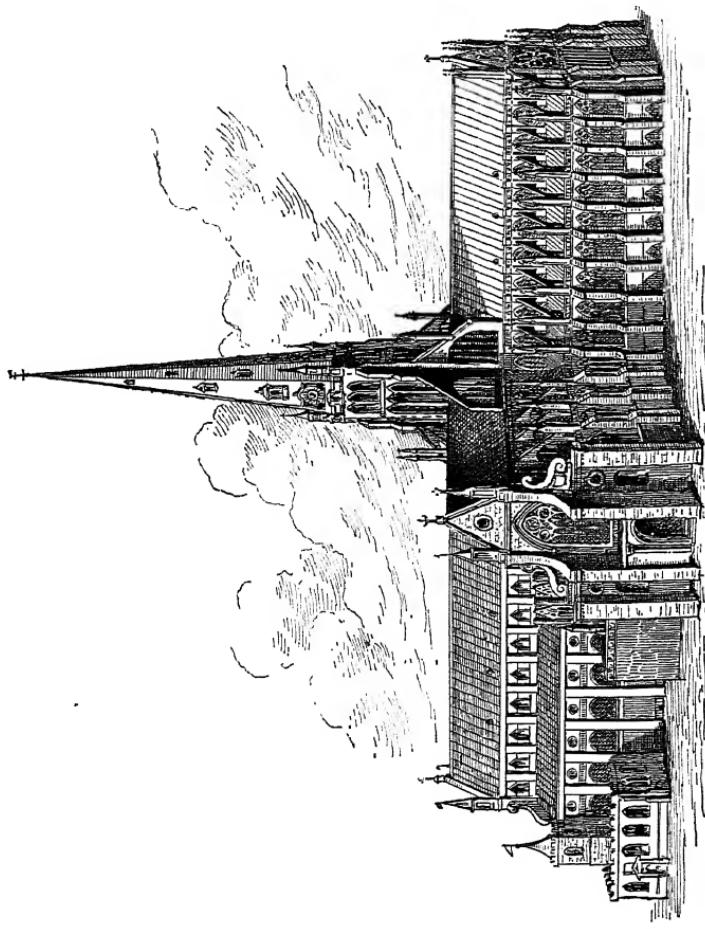
arguments, after the friars had found a willing listener in Courtenay, and after the Duke of Lancaster had begun to stumble in his ambitious course. When the Reformer may be said in fighting phrase to have thrown away his scabbard, or at what particular moment the Pope and the Sacred College determined to crush their formidable enemy, it would be difficult to say.

The bulls which arrived in England in November, 1377, demanding that proceedings should be taken against Wyclif, were dated May 22d of the same year. The charges on which they were ostensibly based had reached Avignon from England before the close of 1376. It is in every way probable that this first open breach between Wyclif and the authorities of the Church was brought about by the initiative of the friars before June, 1376, whilst John of Gaunt was not a member of the King's Council. The temporary eclipse of the powerful Duke would naturally seem to afford a good opportunity for moving against the heretic whom he had protected. The death of the Prince of Wales, and the renewal of his brother's influence, would be quite enough to make the astute Pope withhold his bulls for a time. It was clearly hopeless to move against a friend of the Duke's and to hazard a new decretal amongst these wrong-headed and contemptuous English, at a crisis when holy bishops like Wykeham and Courtenay were stripped of their honours and goods, or made to eat their words in public for the very offence of publishing a papal bull.

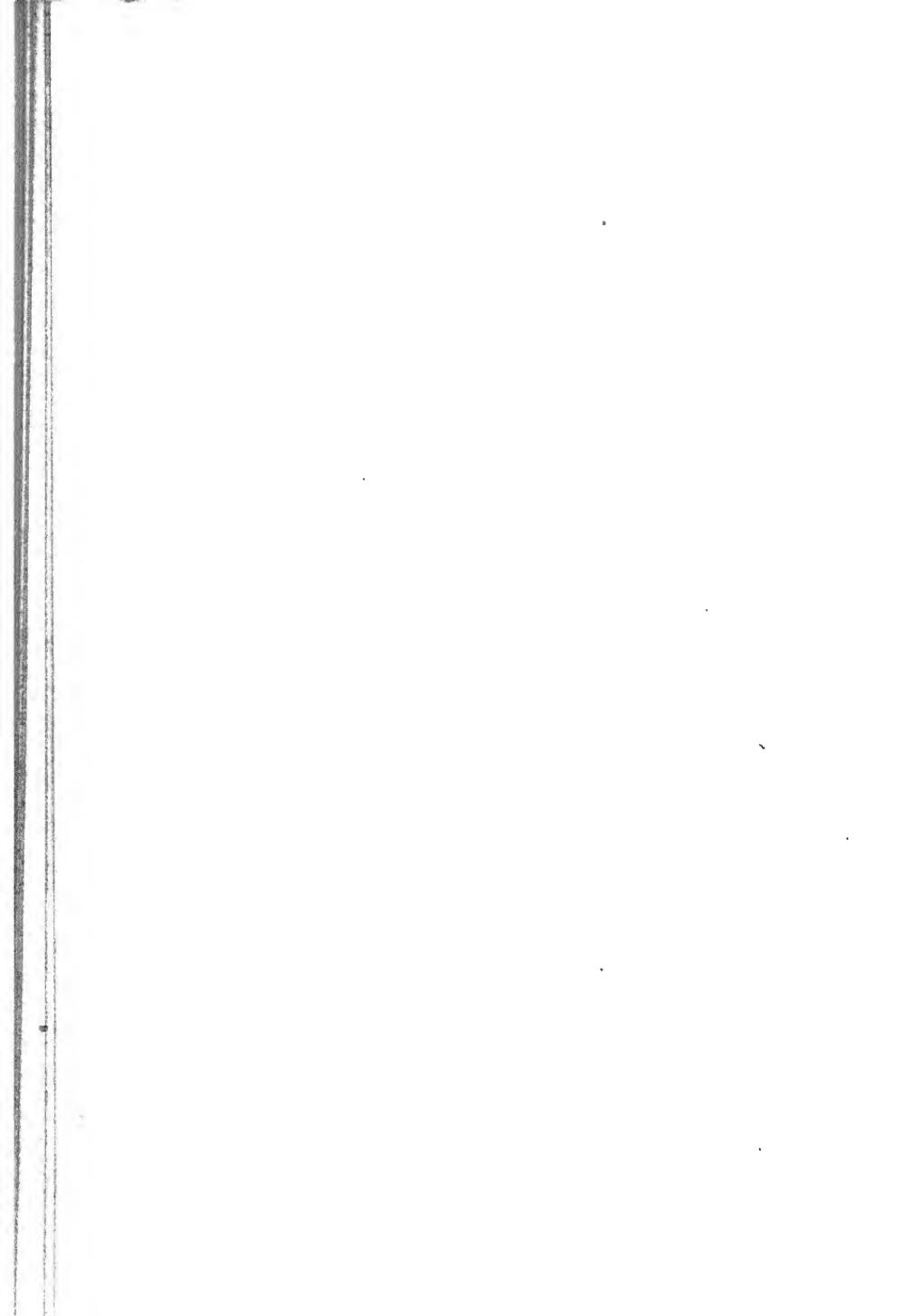
Before long the Pope would hear of the famous

Convocation in 1377. He would learn how that splendid champion of the Church, William Courtenay, rising in dignity amongst his peers, and even rebuking the weaker Primate to his face, had made a scathing speech against the formidable Duke, and had refused in the name of the Church to grant a single penny for the King's necessities until the wrongs of the disgraced Wykeham should be redressed. Here evidently was a man who dared to withstand the outrageous John of Gaunt; and the same month of February was not to pass away without giving Gregory another proof that the tide was beginning to turn in England, and that the star of Courtenay was in the ascendant. The Pope had himself been Archdeacon of Canterbury, and may have known something of English feeling—though the facts do not go far to warrant such a conclusion.

It is necessary to keep the order of events precisely fixed in our minds, for confusion has arisen amongst some of the earlier biographers of Wyclif in respect of the proceedings taken against him by Courtenay. Wyclif was cited by Courtenay to appear before him at St. Paul's—or perhaps before Convocation—in February, 1377, at the time when the annual parliament of the clergy was assembled in London. Clearly this had nothing to do with Gregory's bulls, which were not signed until the following May. The citation need not have been issued many days before it was returnable, on the 19th of February, but it may well have been conceived and prepared weeks or months before. It was Courtenay's act, and apparently Courtenay's alone; for the citation was to



OLD ST. PAUL'S.—EXTERIOR.  
FROM DUGDALE'S "HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL."



the Lady Chapel of old St. Paul's, and he presided in person over the inquiry. Is it possible to dissociate it from the bold act which procured Wykeham's restoration? Must we not take the two acts together as Courtenay's retort for his treatment after the Florentine riot—or at any rate as a challenge to John of Gaunt on behalf of the rulers of the Church?

It is probable enough that Wyclif's militant spirit led him to anticipate with a certain keen satisfaction the opportunity of fighting out so noble a cause with an antagonist so worthy of his steel. He could not foresee that his own friends would make anything like a connected argument impossible, even if his enemies had been willing to hear him.

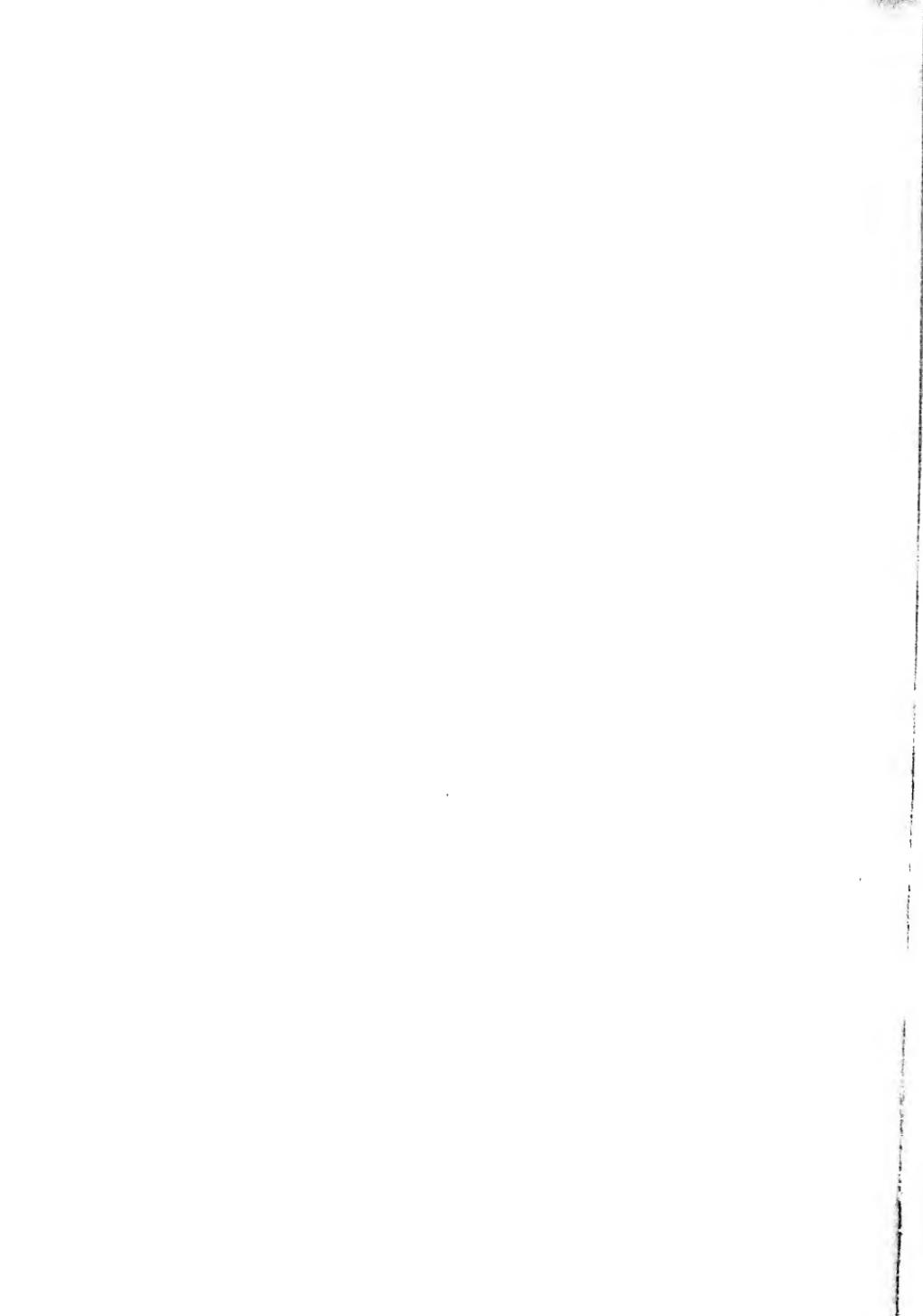
But the Duke of Lancaster seems to have made up his mind beforehand that Courtenay was acting in excess of his jurisdiction—and it is certainly not quite clear what the jurisdiction was. Courtenay was not Wyclif's diocesan; but the latter had preached for many years in the diocese of London, and the Bishop's authority was doubtless sufficient to prevent him from doing so again, if on inquiry he found that the King's chaplain was in the habit of preaching rank heresy. For anything beyond this it would seem that Courtenay would need authorisation from the Pope or the Archbishop. There is no evidence of a bull up to this point, and it is extremely improbable that the proceedings were taken on the authority of Sudbury, who was not heroic enough in his mood to break with and defy the Duke of Lancaster. We can only suppose that Courtenay's position in the matter was a weak one,

and that the Duke felt himself safe in overbearing him with a manifestation of physical force. He would naturally have no confidence in the fairness of the tribunal which Courtenay had set up, apparently for the sole purpose of silencing his clerical ally. And what would the people say, his friends as well as his enemies, if he suffered this priest to get the better of him after such a palpable defiance?

Thus, when the Reformer put in an appearance at St. Paul's on the 19th of February, he was accompanied by John of Gaunt and by a posse of armed men under Lord Percy of Alnwick, afterwards first Earl of Northumberland, who had recently been appointed Marshal of England. Lancaster also brought with him, according to one account, four mendicant friars, perhaps by way of a moral counterpoise to the friars who had notoriously been egging on the Bishop and the Pope to take action against the English Doctor. The arrival of this party in the crowded cathedral created a great disturbance, and Courtenay came forward and reproved them, saying grimly that if he had known they would behave in that fashion he would have taken care that the Marshal and his men should not have entered. The Duke was quite ready for his cousin, and declared that he would exercise his authority there whether the Bishop liked it or no. Then they entered the Lady Chapel, and found, according to the account in the *Chronicon Angliae*, not only bishops but also a number of barons. It is possible that all except Courtenay were assembled as mere spectators of what promised to be an inter-



INTERIOR OF OLD ST. PAUL'S, LOOKING EAST.  
DUGDALE.



esting and exciting case. The barons are mentioned in association with the Duke, and they may have come in Lancaster's train from Westminster.

Before the inquiry could be opened Lord Percy did what he may have considered humane and natural under the circumstances. Wyclif was very properly standing, out of respect for his ecclesiastical superiors, and Percy bade him take a seat. "As he will have many things to answer," said the Marshal, "he should have a more comfortable seat." But the Bishop flatly said that he should not sit there at all. "It is against reason and against the practice of courts," he said, "that he should sit, for he has come on a summons, to answer for himself before his ordinary, and in respect of charges which have been brought against him. For the time of his answer, and so long as his case is being tried, it is right that he should stand where he is."

Thus at the outset a dispute arose between Percy and the Bishop, with many hard words on both sides, and the whole assembly was thrown into confusion. The Duke then began to argue with the Bishop, and Courtenay did his best to let John of Gaunt have tit for tat. Lancaster, says the chronicler, was ashamed of himself because he could not talk the Bishop down; so he began to threaten, and swore that he would humble not his pride only but that of all the bishops in England.

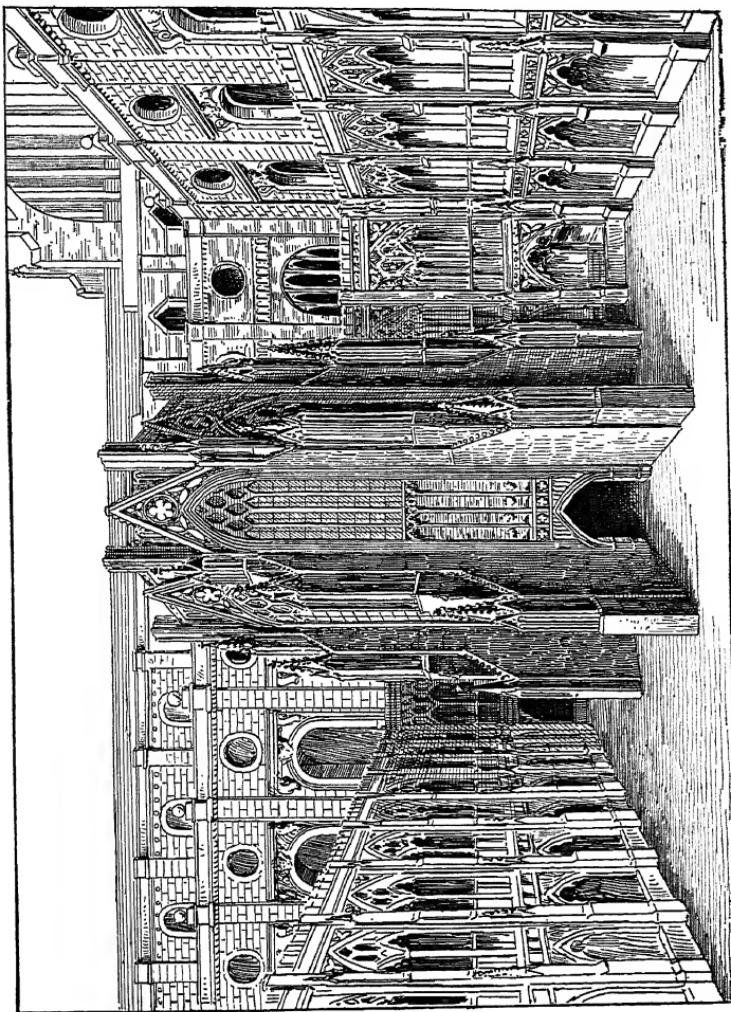
"You trust too much in your father and mother," he said, "but they will not be able to help you. They will have enough to do to look after themselves."

"I do not rely on my parents," said Courtenay, "any more than on yourself, or on any mortal man, but I rely on my God, who deserts none that put their trust in him."

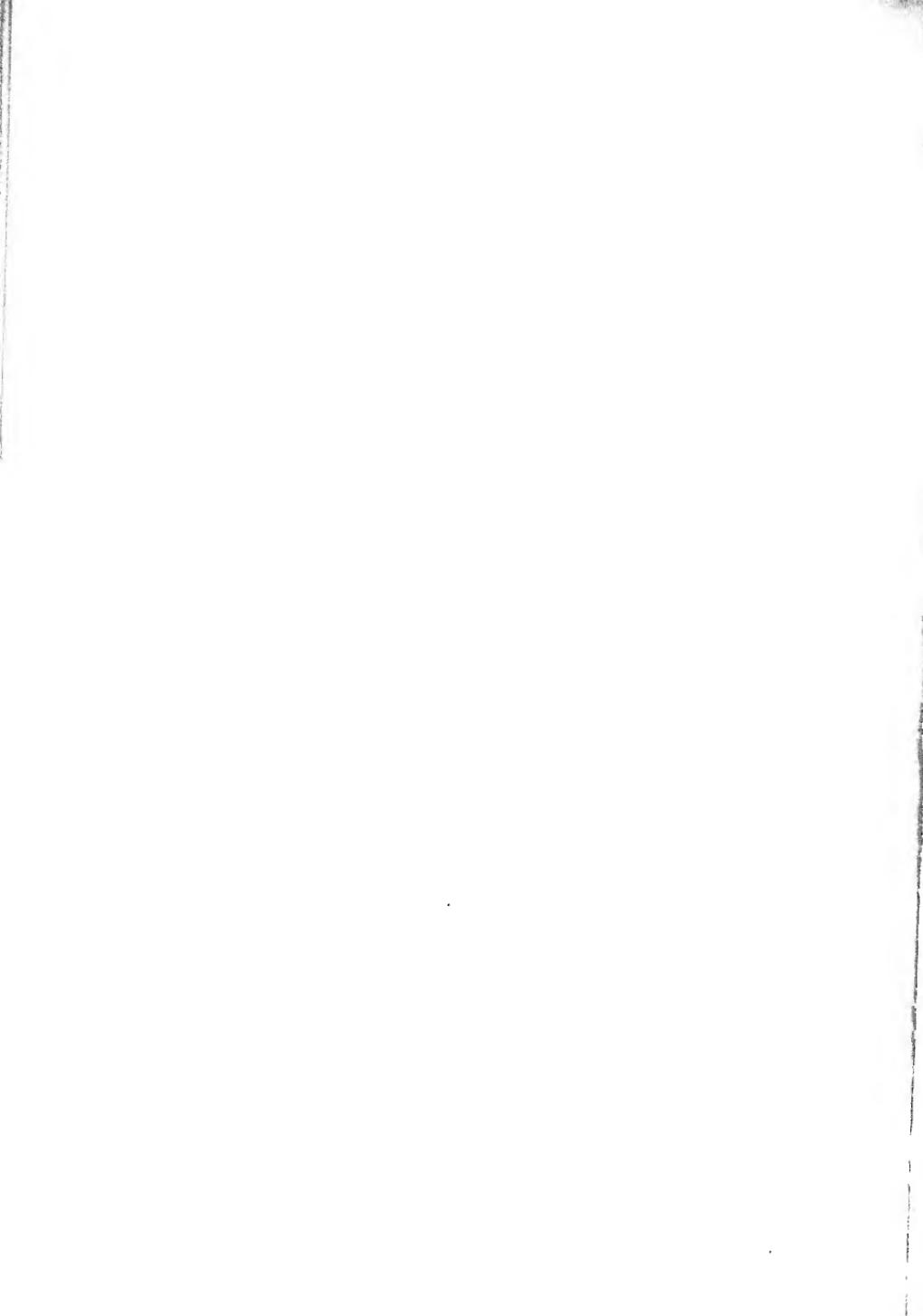
"I would rather take him by the hair," the Duke said in an audible aside, "and drag him out of the church, than put up with such talk from him."

The bystanders were enraged to hear the Bishop insulted in his own cathedral. They not only broke into the wordy contest, but apparently made it plain that they were ready to pass from words to deeds. We are not told whether the city guard were present, inside or outside the cathedral; but it is quite possible that they were, and that both the King's son and the Marshal were a little overawed by the strength arrayed against them. At any rate the wrangle was so fierce that Courtenay found it necessary to dismiss the assembly; and thus the "lying glutton," as the St. Alban's monk piously calls Wyclif—"Doctor Wicked-believe" was another and a more ingenious name for him—escaped censure for the time.

That day and the day which succeeded it were momentous in the records of the city of London, as well as in the lives of Wyclif, Lancaster, and Courtenay. Parliament had met at Westminster in the afternoon, an hour or two before the assembly at St. Paul's, with the Duke of Lancaster presiding. Thomas of Woodstock, afterwards Duke of Gloucester, the King's fifth son, was present, with Lord Percy and the friends of the princes. Apparently there had been a rally of King's friends, by way



OLD ST. PAUL'S CHAPTER HOUSE.  
DUGDALE.



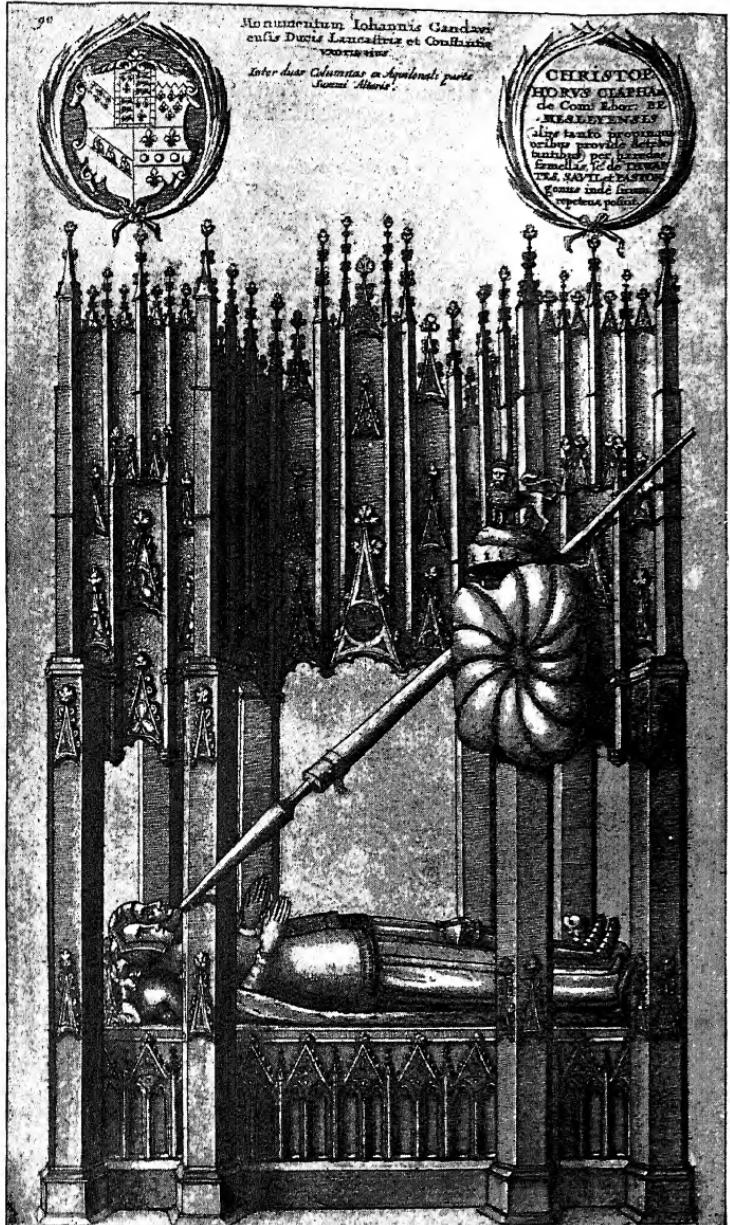
of outflanking the Bishop and the Corporation of London. A string of requests or "petitions" was made in the King's name, amongst which the most important were that the city guard should in future be in command of a captain instead of a mayor ("major"), and that the Marshal of England should have power to arrest within the walls as he had outside—the object being to deprive the Londoners of some of their privileges, and to clip their growing wings. But it happened that one of the most honourable citizens, John Philipot, recently appointed a parliamentary treasurer and auditor-general, in association with Walworth, was in the House, and he entered a vigorous protest against the action of the Court party. He spoke with so much force that the meeting is said to have broken up in confusion—probably not before the majority had agreed to all the propositions. Woodstock and Percy maintained that this had been done, and the Marshal seems to have lost no time in exercising his new authority.

Next day there was a hastily summoned meeting of the City Council, with the aldermen and possibly the mayor in attendance, which discussed the attack made upon their privileges, and considered how it might be repelled. Whilst they were debating, two citizens of superior rank, Lords Fitzwalter and Guy de Brian, made their way into the meeting. They were allowed to remain on condition that they took an oath of loyalty to the Corporation, which they willingly did; and then Fitzwalter made an inflammatory speech, informing the Council that the Marshal had already arrested and imprisoned one of

their fellow-citizens. The Londoners had been at white heat since the previous afternoon, and now they could be restrained no longer. They rushed out, armed or unarmed, and, gathering volume as they went, made straight for Lord Percy's. The Marshal had fled, but the crowd released the prisoner and sacked the house. From thence they marched upon the Savoy; and Lancaster's palace, rich with the spoils of France and Castile, had a very narrow escape.

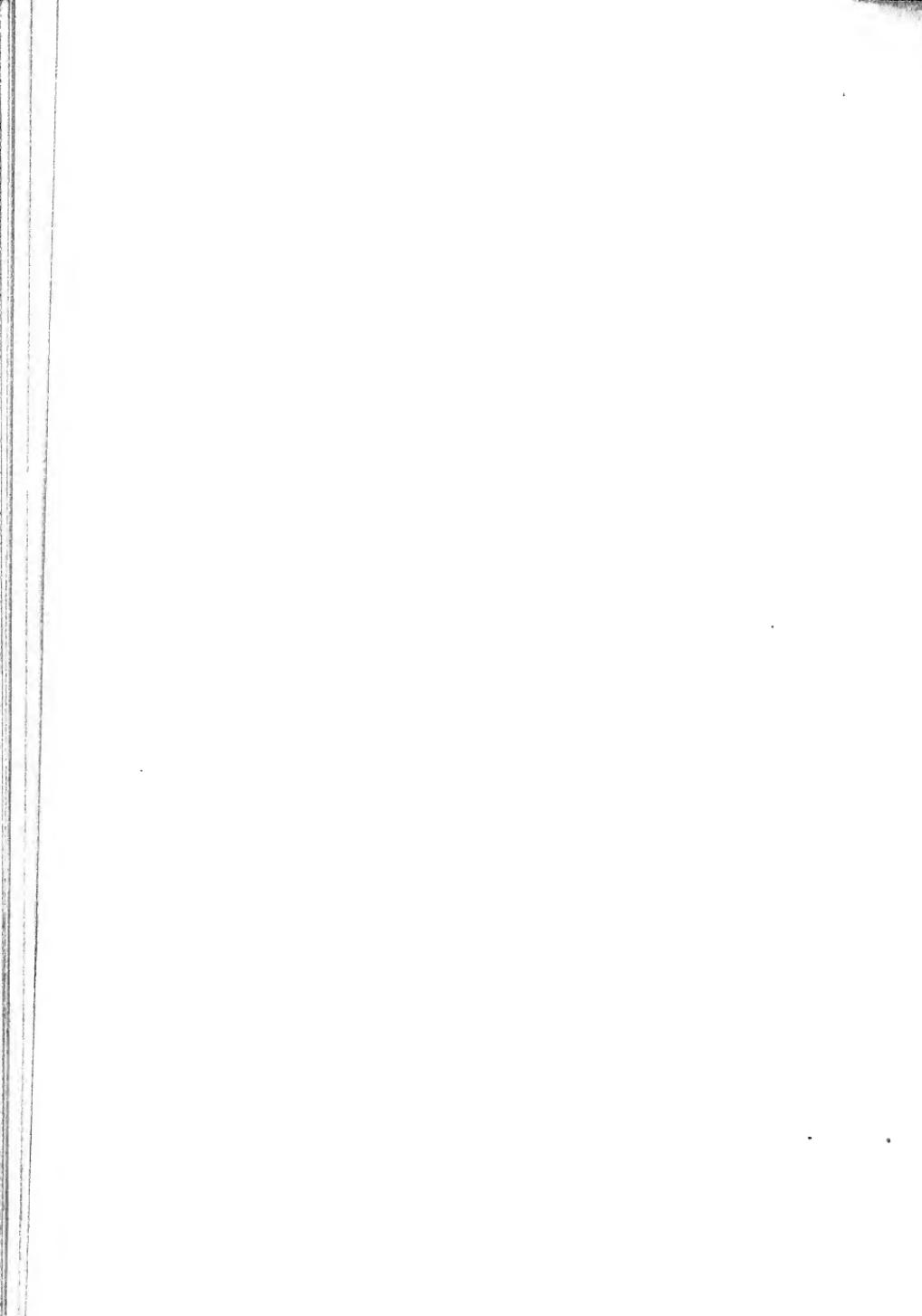
Percy had fled to the Duke, and the two together were said to have crossed the river and appealed to the Princess of Wales at her palace in Kennington. There are two or three versions of the manner in which Lancaster escaped the vengeance of the mob; but it is clear that the Princess befriended him at this crisis, and made terms between him and the enraged citizens. The latter are reported to have demanded a fair trial for the Bishop of Winchester and Peter de la Mare. Probably it was only the leaders of the mob who made these stipulations, and not the city authorities.

We know more than enough of the Duke of Lancaster to account for the bitterness displayed against him at this period of his life. The disasters with which the decade had begun, the not very honourable peace concluded with France and Castile at Bruges, his repeated attacks on the bishops and on the city, his close relations with the most corrupt persons about the Court, his apparent rivalry with the popular Prince of Wales, his opposition to the Good Parliament, his unscrupulous packing of the



MONUMENT OF JOHN, DUKE OF LANCASTER, AND OF HIS WIFE CONSTANCE,  
IN OLD ST. PAUL'S.

DUGDALE.



Parliament of 1377, have been mentioned already. He had made so many enemies by this time that the more ignorant as well as the more unscrupulous amongst them either believed or pretended to believe that he had profited by the embezzlements of men like Lyons, and that, instead of being a legitimate prince, he had been palmed upon Edward III. by Queen Philippa. It is not surprising that, when his eldest brother died, he should have been thought capable of harbouring a design to get rid of his nephew Richard, and to secure the throne for himself. The insult to Courtenay would scarcely have moved the citizens so deeply if their prejudice had not already been raised by such facts and suspicions as these.

Walter Savage Landor, with the insight of genius, has imagined a conversation, occurring on the day of the riot, between John of Gaunt and Joanna of Kent, his cousin in blood, and the widowed mother of Richard. He represents the Princess of Wales as coming to rescue him in the Savoy palace, and standing with him at a window, looking down on the surging mob beneath. "How is this, my cousin," she says, "that you are besieged in your own house, by the citizens of London? I thought you were their idol." To which he answers: "If their idol, madam, I am one which they may tread on as they list when down; but which, by my soul and knighthood! the ten best battle-axes among them shall find it hard work to unshrine." He suspects that she has come with her guard to arrest him; but they are reconciled by a reference to the dead Prince,

and Joanna says to him : "Cousin, you loved your brother. Love, then, what was dearer to him than his life: protect what he, valiant as you have seen him, cannot ! The father, who foiled so many, hath left no enemies ; the innocent child, who can injure no one, finds them !" She speaks to the angry citizens and deftly turns their anger. "Let none ever tell me again he is the enemy of my son . . . your darling child, Richard. Are your fears more lively than a poor weak female's ? than a mother's ? yours, whom he hath so often led to victory, and praised to his father, naming each—he, John of Gaunt, the defender of the helpless, the comforter of the desolate, the rallying signal of the desperately brave!" She stands surety for his loyalty and allegiance, and the fickle mob cheer the Duke as well as herself.

The scene is imaginary ; but it is an imagination which will scarcely lead us far astray. John of Gaunt had very possibly brought more odium upon himself than his acts deserved. He was faithful to his sister-in-law and loyal to his nephew, whom, if he had lived but a few months longer, he would have succeeded on the throne.

Reasons have been assigned for thinking that the abortive failure of the St. Paul's inquiry, and the evidence which it gave of Courtenay's ability to hold his own, were amongst the motives which led the Pope to take action against Wyclif in the spring of 1377. But, between the signing of the bulls and their formal delivery in England, Edward III. had brought his glorious reign to its shameful end ; and the appeal which Gregory had framed for the

veteran King had to be re-directed to his grandson. Gregory himself did not live long enough to see the issue of his attack on the strongest living enemy of Rome; but he must have died in full confidence that the thunders of the Church would eventually strike down this impious English heretic.

Richard II. came to the throne on June 21st. His first Council included Courtenay, with the Bishops of Carlisle and Salisbury, the Earl of March, Lord Stafford, Sir John Stafford, Sir Henry Scrope, Sir John Devereux, and Sir Hugh Segrave. It was a "clerical" ministry, independent of, if not opposed to, John of Gaunt—though Walsingham says that it was selected with his "connivance." Courtenay does not appear to have taken any active part in the government of the country. Indeed we find him flatly declining to obey the Council, having fallen into another desperate quarrel with Lancaster, and publicly excommunicated his friends and instruments for a gross violation of sanctuary—to which Wyclif himself refers as "a horrible crime." His refusal to abstain from the repeated publication of the sentence, when called upon to do so by the Council, was the best thing which he could possibly have done for the Duke. From that time forward Lancaster seems to have steadily regained his influence; and he gradually assumed the lead of the new Court party.

The first Parliament of this reign met at Gloucester on October 13th, and one of its earliest duties was to consider whether payment of Peter's pence should continue to be made to the Pope. The

question was referred to Wyclif, as a similar question had been referred to him eleven years before; and the answer which he gave was perhaps more significant than some of his biographers have led us to suppose. As a matter of fact, the King's chaplain gave two answers in the same treatise—first, the answer of a logical and independent mind, and then the answer of prudence and expediency. He was asked “whether the realm of England may legitimately, under urgent necessity of self-defence, prevent the resources of the kingdom from being carried away to foreigners, even though the Pope demand it under pain of censure, and by a strict appeal to our obedience.”

Wyclif begins by declaring that he must leave it to trained lawyers to say what should be done according to the canon law, the law of England, and the civil law, and undertakes to argue the matter out according to the law of Christ. The realm, he says, is quite entitled to keep its property, first as a mode of self-preservation, and next because the payments to Rome originated as alms and charity, and they are no longer required as such, whereas the Bible and the Fathers teach us that charity begins at home. Again we are bound by the law of conscience—and especially the rulers of the country are so bound—to think of our own country first, and not to impoverish it. In regard to Peter's pence especially, pious founders left their benefactions for the Church of England alone, that the clergy might live thereby, and give the rest in alms. Before allowing any of this wealth to leave the country, our rulers should take

immediate steps to check the abuse, moved thereto by thinking of the souls of the departed, of their own responsibility, and of the safety of the realm. All the world would laugh at our “asinine folly” if we who dared to invade other countries for secular causes were afraid of holding back trust-funds in the name of God from unworthy claimants. The laws of nature, of Scripture, of conscience, bid us boldly say No to the Pope.

What then (Wyclif goes on to consider) would the Pope do if we refused this money? Assume that he would excommunicate the whole realm, put us under an interdict, declare our goods forfeit, as he did to the Florentines, raise a crusade against us, stamp us with the mark of schismatics, as Rome has done for the Greeks. But only an unworthy affection could be disturbed by the withdrawal of such charity as this. The Holy Father, seeing on one side how the Turk grows stronger and stronger in Europe (for reasons best known to God), and seeing on the other that the realm of England is conspicuous for its piety, would not create so grave a scandal through mere greed of temporalities. And even if some disciple of Anti-christ should break out into such madness, it is a consolation to think that censures of this kind are not binding in the sight of God. The limit of what Christians should give to the Pope is what his office demands; but people have been taught to confound the office with the pomp surrounding it.

On the other hand, it has been argued that if we kept this money in England, it would be a cause of wantonness, lubricity, and avarice. If so, then let

us reduce the gifts of our benefactors to their former modest level, and devote the overplus to restore the true peace of the Church. Another danger would exist in the lack of perseverance which distinguishes Englishmen. (Impossible not to see in this phrase a touch of the disillusion which politics had already produced in Wyclif's mind!) "So far as this danger is concerned, there is nothing for it but to strengthen the whole nation in unanimous firmness, before the thing can be attempted. . . . I do not see how we could attempt to do this, unless the common consent of the whole people were obtained for it. . . . It would be rash for a private individual to give this advice, since a matter of such a kind ought to proceed from the agreement of the realm as a whole. . . . It would behove us therefore to use great forethought, and to have a unanimous Parliament, before the nation begins to carry such a work into effect, lest personal influence or private advantage should cause an injury hereafter to the common weal of the country."

The drift of this treatise is sufficiently evident. Wyclif answered the question as to the legitimacy of refusing Peter's pence with an unqualified affirmative. It is not only our right and our interest to do it, but it is our duty. Yet he who has a duty to perform may be at liberty to select the time for performing it. "I advise you to wait until you are stronger and more unanimous. By suddenly refusing all pecuniary aids to the Pope, you would risk not only disaster abroad, but even civil war at home. I dare not take upon myself the responsibility of

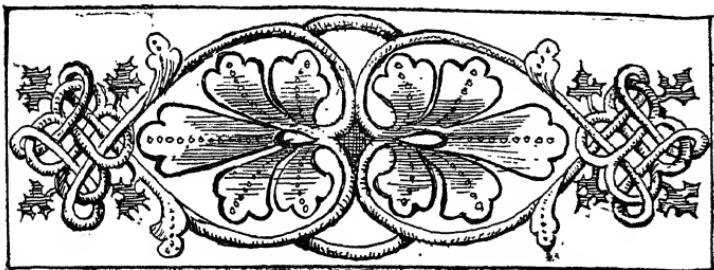
counselling you to stop the payment of Peter's pence."

Two things will probably occur to a sympathetic reader in connection with this interesting State document, written, as we know that it was, when the substance of the Pope's bulls had already come to Wyclif's ears, or at least the knowledge that such bulls had been framed and despatched against him. One thing is that the writer could not have been a fanatic, and was far from losing his head through hatred of Rome, since, when he had the power of egging on the Commons and the barons to strike a telling blow at the Papacy, he forbore to do so from motives of wise calculation and prudence. And another thing which strikes us is that this calculation and this prudence were by no means based on selfish considerations, suggested by the aforementioned bulls, for never had Wyclif spoken or written in a more uncompromising spirit of the claims of Rome, the independence of England, and the freedom of the individual conscience. The paper was addressed to the King and the great Council. It would very probably be read aloud to both Houses, and certainly the bishops would be made acquainted with its contents, so that if the Reformer's object had been to strike a bargain, and to palter with his convictions, he could not have done it in a more unfortunate manner.

The Parliament which received and acted upon this remarkable compound of anti-papal stricture and patriotic prudence was of course not the same as that which had met early in the year, in which

the Commons had been packed by John of Gaunt, and which had discharged its functions by the first week of March. The demise of the Crown had been followed by the issue of new writs, and the new members would doubtless be thoroughly loyal, well-disposed to the Princess of Wales, and in perfect accord with the King's Council. It is probable that the elections had been free from interference ; the loyalty of the country would be taken for granted, and certainly the Duke of Lancaster was not just then strong enough to influence them, even if he had been minded to play the Princess false, which there is no reason to suppose. It is not without significance that this first Parliament of Richard II., chosen without any bias on the part of Wyclif's patrons, should have treated him with so much distinction, consulting him on a State question of capital importance, and receiving (and virtually approving) his rejoinder to the papal bulls.





## CHAPTER X.

### POPE GREGORY'S BULLS.



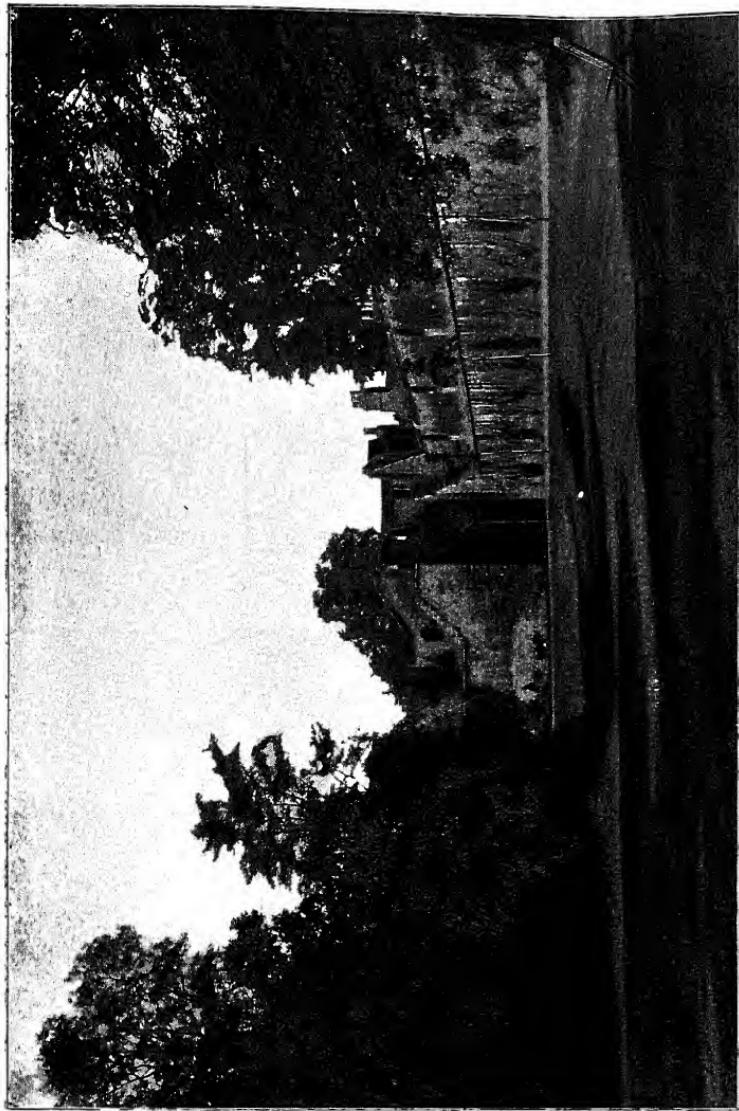
N May 22, 1377, as already mentioned, Pope Gregory XI. signed his bulls against Wyclif. They had not been received in England before the death of Edward III. on June 21st. It would be necessary to recall them if they had been despatched, or at any rate to send a covering letter for the personal appeal which was addressed to the King. In view of the consequent changes and pre-occupations of the English Government, Gregory would naturally allow two or three months to pass before he opened the matter. It does not appear that the documents were actually delivered in England until the Gloucester Parliament had been sitting for over a fortnight.

There were in all five bulls, one of which was addressed to the King, one to the University of

Oxford, and the other three to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London conjointly. Gregory called upon the Archbishop and Bishop to examine into the truth of the nineteen charges which had been brought against Wyclif, and which were set forth in the bulls. The ecclesiastics were to warn the Government of the country that they were harbouring a dangerous heretic, and were to demand his arrest ; but if this demand were not complied with, they were to cite him to appear at Rome. As an alternative course, which may or may not have been suggested beforehand by Courtenay—it was certainly in keeping with his personal courage and independence—the last bull invited the prelates to arrest the accused (assuming that he was found to be guilty of heresy and that the civil arm would not touch him), and to await the sentence of the Pope.

The bull addressed to the King was an appeal for the royal favour and protection on behalf of the two prelates in their action against Wyclif—whom Gregory described as holding and teaching the “unlearned doctrine” of Marsilius of Padua, *damnatae memoriae*, who stands condemned by Pope John XXII., of happy memory.

Writing to Oxford, the Pope declared that he could not but wonder and lament that, by their sloth and laziness, the authorities of the University permitted tares to spring up amongst the genuine wheat of their famous soil, and not only to spring up but, still more pernicious, to come to maturity, without taking any trouble to root them out. The Holy Father had been all the more distressed because the



NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.  
PART OF THE CITY WALL, CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH WYCLIF.

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flourishing of these tares had been recognised at Rome before any notice had been taken of it in England, where it was necessary that the remedy should be applied. After more expostulation he strictly enjoined the University, in virtue of their obedience to the Holy See, and under penalty of being deprived of all graces, indulgences, and privileges bestowed upon them by the said See, that for the future they should suffer no man to teach the condemned opinions within the University.

The nineteen charges which had been made against Wyclif, and which were endorsed by the Pope's bulls, attributed to him the following opinions:

1. Not even the universal consent of mankind since the time of Christ has power to ordain that Peter and his successors should hold political dominion over the world.
2. God himself could not give to any man and his heirs a civil dominion for ever.
3. Charters of human origin, concerning a perpetual inheritance for the future, are futile.
3. Everyone that is finally justified not only has a right to, but actually enjoys, all the good things of God.
5. Man can only ministerially give to his natural child, or to a child of imitation in the school of Christ, temporal or eternal dominion.
6. If God is [omnipotent], temporal lords may lawfully and meritoriously take away the property which has accrued to a delinquent Church.
7. Whether the Church be in such a state or not it is not my business to examine, but the business

of temporal lords, who, if they find it in such a state, are to act boldly, and on pain of damnation to take away its temporalities.

8. We know that it is impossible that the Vicar of Christ should, purely by his bulls, or by them with the will and consent of himself and his College of Cardinals, qualify or disqualify anyone.

9. It is not possible for any man to be excommunicated, unless he be first and principally excommunicated by himself.

10. Nobody is excommunicated, suspended, or tormented with other censures so as to be the worse for it, unless it be in the cause of God.

11. Cursing or excommunication does not bind simply of itself, but only so far as it is denounced against an adversary of the law of Christ.

12. Christ has given to his disciples no example of a power to excommunicate subjects principally for their denying temporal things, but has rather given them an example to the contrary.

13. The disciples of Christ have no power forcibly to exact temporal things by censures.

14. It is not possible even for the absolute power of God to effect that, if the Pope or any other pretend that he binds or looses absolutely, he does actually so bind or loose.

15. We ought to believe that then only does the Pope bind or loose when he conforms himself to the law of Christ.

16. This ought to be universally believed, that every priest rightly ordained has a power of administering every one of the sacraments, and, by conse-

quence, of absolving every contrite person from any sin.

17. It is lawful for kings to take away temporalities from ecclesiastics who habitually abuse them.

18. Whether temporal lords, or holy Popes, or saints, or the head of the Church, which is Christ, have endowed the Church with goods of fortune or of grace, and have excommunicated those who take away its temporalities, it is notwithstanding lawful, by the condition implied in the endowment, to strip her of temporalities for an adequate offence.

19. An ecclesiastic, yea, even the Pope of Rome, may lawfully be corrected by subjects, and even by the laity, and may also be accused or impeached by them.

We have only to carry ourselves back in spirit to the intellectual and religious atmosphere of the fourteenth century in order to realise how overwhelming such a charge as that now brought against Wyclif must have appeared to every pious person who accepted the allegations as correct. Even those who thought with him, who were able to keep pace with his logic, and knew how reverently his beliefs were entertained, must have stood aghast in many instances at the temerity with which he assailed the position of the Popes and the current orthodoxy of his day. And Wyclif himself could scarcely hope to escape the censures of Rome, or even of the English bishops if they were compelled to pronounce a formal judgment on his conclusions. He knew that it was impossible to obtain a perfectly impartial tribunal within

the Church, and probably foresaw that only the lapse of time could discredit a system which had required so many generations to build it up.

The reception of the bulls was very different in different quarters. Courtenay alone rejoiced in his opportunity, and prepared to silence effectually this discordant and disturbing note within the national Church. Sudbury invited the Chancellor of Oxford to send him assessors and doctors of divinity, stating that he meant to hold an inquiry as requested by the Pope, but implying that he did not intend to go beyond the inquiry. At Oxford there was a decided feeling of annoyance over Gregory's message; and the King's Council could not fail to look with jealousy and dislike on the introduction of the bulls, which, strictly regarded, were a defiance of English law and an encroachment on the authority of the Crown.

It was necessary for Wyclif, in view of his official relations with Parliament, to send in a statement dealing with the bull which had been addressed to the King. Perhaps he was called upon to do so; or he may have thought it only respectful on his part to make his position clear to a body of men who had placed their confidence in him, and some of whom would certainly take the side of his accusers. There can be no doubt that the open censure of the Pope marked another important turning-point in his life, and that from this time forward he would have a largely increased number of his countrymen ranged against him. The paper presented to Parliament was in almost the same terms as that read before the

Pope's Commissioners at Lambeth, to which we shall presently come; but it differs in its conclusion.

"This" he says, "is in some respect an answer to the bull. I want to be considered as delivering these conclusions like a grain of faith, separated from the chaff in which the unwelcome tares are burned, which tares, after their red blossom of malodorous revenge, provide materials for Antichrist against the genuine writings of faith. An unmistakable sign whereof is that a poison born of the Evil One reigns in the hearts of the clergy, a pride which consists in the lust of mastery, whose mate, the lust of earthly goods, begets children of the devil, whilst the children of evangelical poverty are extinct. You may judge of the fruitfulness of this procreation by the fact that many even of the children of poverty give countenance to the degenerate brood, either by speech or by silence, whether because they are not strong enough or because they do not dare, on account of the seed of the man of sin which has been sown in their hearts, or from a slavish fear of losing such temporalities as they have, to make a stand for evangelical poverty."

The tenour of the statement made by Wyclif to the University was very similar to this, and it is evident from the bitterness of the few sentences just quoted that the keen and natural indignation of the man could not be altogether suppressed. His moral and intellectual appreciation of the unchristlike attitude of the Christian Churches of his day, sensitive and palpitating as it was, had been stung to the quick. He would have been something very different

from what we know him to have been if he could have seen anything less than Antichrist in the virulence with which an advocate of ecclesiastical poverty was attacked by the Vicar of Christ and by the English prelates.

How does Oxford bear the scrutiny of the nineteenth century in this connection, across an interval of five hundred years? Half a millennium has passed since the premier University drew to the close of her first golden age. For Wyclif Oxford was still the head-quarters of thought, and work, and love. It was to Black Hall in Oxford that he hurried, as soon as the session was concluded at Gloucester, in order to hold communion with his life-long friends—as another famous son of the English Church, in circumstances curiously contrasted, yet in a certain sense parallel with those of Wyclif at this crisis in his faith, went up from Littlemore in the memory of some who are still living, to see, as he puts it, “those familiar affectionate companions and counsellors, who in Oxford were given to me, one after another, to be my daily solace and relief; and all those others, of great name and high example, who were my thorough friends, and showed me true attachment in times long past; and also those many young men, whether I knew them or not, who have never been disloyal to me by word or by deed.” Wyclif was approaching a mental and moral crisis quite as searching for him as that through which Newman had passed in 1843. His doubts on the subject of transubstantiation had already begun to take form and substance, and he must have felt that

the action of Rome and Canterbury would impel him to a decision from which even his warmest friends would be likely to start back in alarm.

But up to this point the question was not of transubstantiation. The Archbishop and the Bishop, seeing that Wyclif had betaken himself to Oxford, and allowing the claim which he had thus tacitly made on his University, wrote on December 18th to demand that the Chancellor and the theological authorities should hold an inquiry and make a report in answer to the papal bull, and that they should then remit the accused to London, to appear to their own citation. Oxford stood the test. The Chancellor directed Wycliff to remain within the hall where he was lodging, and the "conclusions" which Gregory had condemned were duly examined, together with Wyclif's rejoinder. The decision arrived at was of a most important character. Oxford declared the conclusions to be true, and not heretical, though they were so expressed as to be open to misconception.

With this testimonial from his University Wyclif was able to make his appearance before the prelates with a stout heart, but probably not without a conviction that his struggle against the papal Court was rapidly coming to an issue.

Meanwhile his most implacable enemies must have regarded all these things as mere by-play, and they must have been impatient for the discipline of the Holy See to produce its natural effect. The lightning had been hurled, and they wanted to hear the unmistakable thunders of Rome. It was all

very well for the nobles and the young King's mother to lull the heretic into fancied security, and for his University to stand by him in a spirit of simple partisanship ; but Rome had spoken, and the efforts of the orthodox, continued over a series of years, were about to meet their due reward. Devout sons of the Church, and good friars in particular, had been scandalised and tricked often enough, but at last the fox was run to earth, and the whole hunt were longing to see him taken.

Archbishop Sudbury had originally cited Wyclif to appear on the 18th of December at St. Paul's, where, ten short months before, he had slipped through Courtenay's hands, owing to the disturbed condition of the city, and the deadly feud between the citizens and the Duke of Lancaster. It would not be strange if this appointment was countermanded because the citizens, with the easy versatility of mankind in the mass, were now more likely to be on Lancaster's side than against him. Possibly London had not changed its mind and its sympathies in regard to Wyclif, except that Gregory's bulls must have made it more Wycliffite than ever; but John of Gaunt had almost ceased to vex the citizens. They were enthusiastic for the Princess Joan, who had not concealed her liking for the Court preacher; and they had men to lead them, like brave John of Northampton, who had boasted that no bull from the Pope of Rome should harm John Wyclif within the liberties of the city.

The citizens had been stirred, no doubt, as Oxford had been stirred, and liberal-minded Christians

throughout England, by a moving appeal just circulated far and wide over London and the provinces. It was an anonymous tract, vigorous and eloquent, calling upon all good clerks and Christians to stand together at that important crisis, and rally in defence of the conclusions of Wyclif, and the independence of the English Church. "If these conclusions are heretical," said the pamphleteer, "Holy Scripture itself falls to pieces." The tract has been generally ascribed to Wyclif. Whoever wrote it, it seems to have been very effective, and the Londoners were enthusiastic for the man who was making such a bold stand against the Pope.

At any rate the prelates lost their nerve, and they were compelled to change the venue. Sudbury postponed the hearing until after Christmas, and summoned the accused to his town-house near the Lamb Hithe. The Archbishop was just now on as good terms as ever with the Duke, and perhaps, if the truth were known, he was not sorry to shift his ground almost within earshot of the royal palace at Kennington. The whole thing was more Courtenay's affair than his, and, if Courtenay could not answer for the rabble round his own cathedral, the nearer they drew to the protection of the Court, the better Sudbury would be pleased.

So, on the appointed day, John Wyclif came before his judges at Lambeth, and with his cool collected look he scanned the group of assessors—doctors of decretals, professors of theology and of the "sacred page," whether secular clergymen, monks, or friars, who had come up for the occasion from

Oxford and Cambridge. It was perhaps not he who would be most disconcerted by that mutual recognition.

He had brought with him a written paper of declarations, by way of defence against the charges. After the preliminaries were over, and Sudbury had reminded him what it was that he was called upon to answer, he would be allowed to read his defence ; and the paper in which his apology was comprised has been handed down to us—carefully preserved by his stern censor, Thomas of Walden. This document, practically re-stating and justifying all the conclusions which had been attributed to him, opened in a strain of dignified humility.

“To begin with,” he said, “ I make my public profession, as I have often done elsewhere, professing and claiming with my whole heart to be, by the grace of God, a sound Christian, and that so far as I am able, whilst there is breath in my body, I speak forth and defend the law of Christ. Furthermore, if, by ignorance or any other cause, I fall short in this, I beseech my God for pardon, and I do here and now revoke and withdraw it, submitting myself to the correction of holy Mother Church. . . . I desire to state in writing my conviction in regard to that whereof I have been accused, which I will defend even to the death, as I hold that all Christians ought to do—and in particular the Roman Pontiff, and the other priests of the Church.”

Then the indomitable man set himself to expound and expand his conclusions, and stated them all over again with increased clearness and pungency,

neither shirking nor fining down, but treating every charge as a text for new exposition. Had it been arranged (by others, of course, than Courtenay) that he should have his say, completely and deliberately, and that then this abortive farce of the Pope's jurisdiction in England should be brought to an end? The Council, or at all events the Princess of Wales, had resolved that there should be no definite action upon Gregory's bulls; and on the previous evening, according to some accounts, but at any rate before the conclusion of the hearing, one Lewis Clifford brought them word from the King's mother that they were not to pass judgment on Wyclif. The reference of the St. Alban's chronicle to these proceedings is so quaint, and the indignation of the writer is so natural in an orthodox monk of his day, that a few sentences may be quoted here.

"It would be better to say nothing than to speak of the indifferent and slothful manner in which the two Bishops performed the task entrusted to them. . . . On the arrival of the day (*instante die*) appointed for the examination of that apostate, through fear of a reed shaken by the wind, they made their words softer than oil, to the public loss of their own dignity and to the damage of the universal Church. The men who had sworn that they would not obey the very barons and princes of the kingdom until they had punished the excesses of the heresiarch himself, according to the commands of the Pope, were paralysed with terror at the sight of some fellow from the court of the Princess Joan, who was neither a knight of good standing nor a

man of any influence, one Lewis Clifford to wit, who pompously ordered them that they should not presume to come to any formal decision concerning the aforesaid John."

It is uncertain how far the inquiry before Sudbury and Courtenay was allowed to proceed. The Princess and the Duke were not the only bars to its progress. Possibly Wyclif had read his defence, and Courtenay, it may be, relieving the Gallio-like Archbishop of his function, had exchanged a few vigorous words with the accused. His judges were awkwardly placed, and were anything but masters of the situation. The few contemporary references to this dramatic scene unfortunately do not condescend to many details, and the details which they give are not consistent. According to the continuation of Murimuth's history, "the Archbishop imposed silence on him and all other persons, in regard to the matter in question, in the presence of the Duke of Lancaster,"—this being evidently mentioned as a proof of Sudbury's courage—"forbidding him thenceforth to meddle with or dwell upon the points at issue, or to suffer others," his Poor Priests, for instance, "to spread them abroad. And for a time both he and they kept silence"—which is not very likely,—"but at length, relying on the temporal authorities, they again took up the same opinions, and others which were far worse, and persevered in their mischievous errors."

Then the inevitable citizens, who had tramped across London Bridge, and through the Borough to the Archbishop's chapel, put themselves in evidence

again; and it must have been clear to Courtenay that, even if the King's mother and uncle had not protected this obstinate sower of tares, still the headstrong merchants, tradesmen, and apprentices from his own diocese would have made it extremely difficult for him to give full effect to the papal bulls. As it was, the irruption of the citizens broke up the proceedings, and Wyclif, as just said, escaped with a mild warning. The St. Alban's chronicler, who was living at the time, declares that the crafty heretic (*versipellis*) tricked his examiners through the favour and zeal of the men of London, scoffed at the Bishops, and slipped away.

It is possible enough, considering the force and boldness of Courtenay's character, that he may have had it in his mind and openly expressed his intention to condemn Wyclif in spite of the request of the Princess of Wales, even at the risk of personal disaster to himself. That would explain the holding of the sitting after Clifford's message, the presence and watchfulness of the Duke, and the turbulence of the crowd of citizens. It must be remembered that Sudbury and Courtenay were acting not merely as prelates but also as the Commissioners of the Pope; and the Bishop at all events may have felt and declared that his duty to the Holy Father was higher than his duty to the Princess. He is not likely to have changed his opinion on this point, though he may well have despaired for the moment of reaching the heretic behind the protection of the royal family and the public favour.

The death of Gregory, which would in any case

have put an end to the Commission, took place on the 27th of March. The news would not reach England for some days later, and could not have been anticipated at the hearing in Lambeth Chapel. On the contrary, the authority of the Pope and the determination of Courtenay must have been considerably strengthened by the recent return of the papal Court to Rome.

The fact is manifest that the bulls of 1377, obtained by the religious Orders and acted upon by the Archbishop and Bishop, were not only a venturesome experiment against the laws of England and the notorious feelings of Englishmen, but also a grave tactical mistake on the part of the Holy See. The mere introduction of bulls into the country was an exasperating challenge to the English Parliament and Church, and could only weaken the cause which they were intended to promote. Courtenay, with some of the bishops and the friars, may have rejoiced over their promulgation, but it is doubtful if anyone else shared their feelings. The Archbishop certainly fought shy of them. The young King's advisers resolved at once to set them aside; and Oxford, as we have seen, was morally and intellectually strong enough to decide that the conclusions which the Pope had declared heretical were substantially true.

By the mistake of his enemies Wyclif came out of the ordeal stronger and more influential than he had been at any previous period of his life. From the time of his first prosecution in the spring of 1377 to the dark days in which he was accused of having

incited the peasants to revolt, if not indeed to the end of his earthly career, he was the most important religious factor in England. Nevertheless it is clear that his enemies did not give him much rest between their successive attacks.

The English ecclesiastics had made up their minds to push the assault on Wyclif's position to an issue, and even the death of Gregory, with the subsequent schism, only served to interpose a brief delay. The outcome of the Lambeth hearing was naturally unsatisfactory to them, and they doubtless took counsel with the Roman Curia on the earliest possible opportunity, with a view to further and more effectual proceedings. It does not plainly appear whether Pope Urban took any immediate step to bring Wyclif to account, but there are passages in one of the Reformer's most important and well-considered works which read as though he had had something to answer in 1379. He wrote in the *De Veritate Sanctae Scripturae* in the spring of this year:

“I protested in writing, and it was sent to the papal Curia by the hands of two of the bishops, that I wish to insist upon my declaration, which I have made in the language of Holy Scripture and the sacred doctors; for my salvation in two senses depends upon that language, and my double death would follow upon its contradiction. . . . Surely it is clear from what I have done that I have no fear in consequence of those conclusions, since I circulated them through a great part of England and of Christendom, and even to the Roman Curia, in order that they might be inquired into, at any rate

indirectly. . . . I have no misgiving as to the truth of the said conclusions, for I am willing that they should be examined not only by the Curia but by the whole Church militant and triumphant, that is to say our holy Mother Church, to which I have humbly submitted myself—and far be it from me to exclude the Roman Church, which I hold to be the head of all the militant Churches. Wherefore, since I wished the matter at stake to be communicated to the clergy and laity, I collected and forwarded thirty-three conclusions, written in both languages."

There is something which needs to be cleared up in connection with this bold challenge, and with the facts which preceded and followed it. Urban's own troubles, and the illness of Wyclif in 1379, may partly account for the delay of formal and public prosecution; but it would be interesting to learn the exact circumstances under which the two bishops sent the above-mentioned protest to Rome, and the answer (if any) which was made to the challenge.

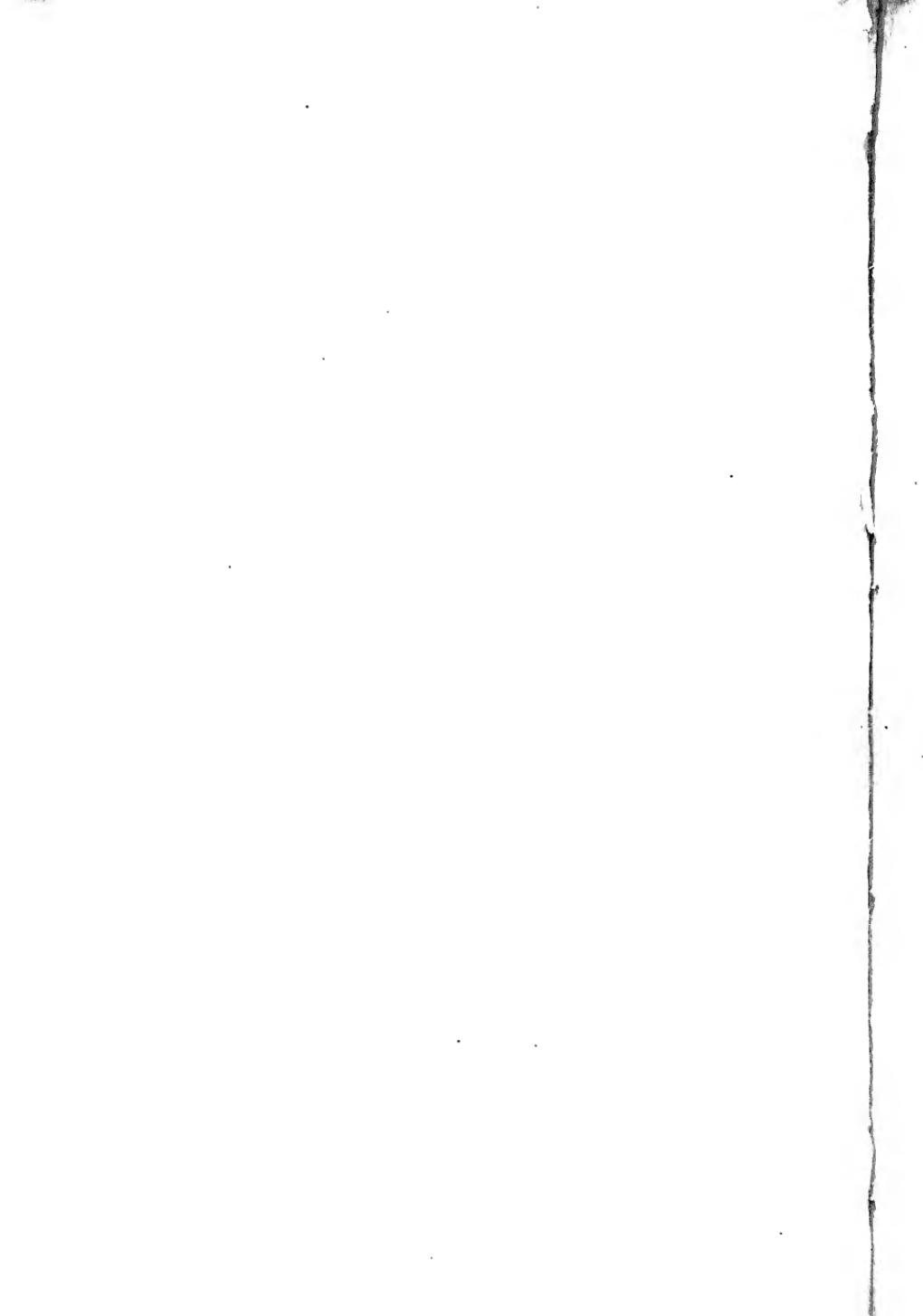


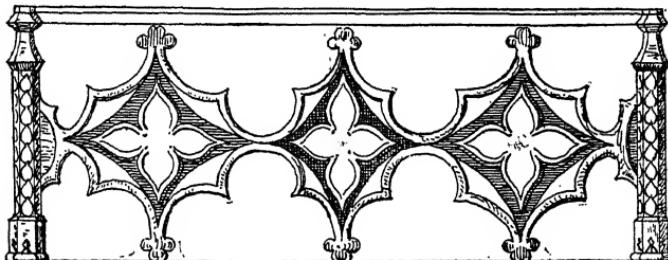


VRBANVS. VI. PAPA. NEAPOLITANVS

POPE URBAN VI.

1378-89.





## CHAPTER XI.

### WYCLIF THE EVANGELIST.



HE title of Doctor Evangelicus, bestowed on John Wyclif by certain of his contemporaries and successors, was unquestionably earned by the importance which he attached to the words of Holy Writ, by his heroic resolve to translate the Bible into English, and by his commission of the "Poor Priests," who were sent out for the express purpose of reading and preaching upon the English Scriptures.

His action in appointing and commissioning these enthusiastic preachers of the Gospel has been compared with that of Dominic and Francis a hundred and fifty years earlier. The parallel is not very close, but we can hardly doubt that the Reformer was inspired by those two conspicuous examples to

adopt a similar method, in the hope of re-awakening the conscience of Christian men and women. He could think of no better way of rousing the spirits of his ignorant countrymen than to put the Bible in the hands of devoted missionaries, and to bid them take it as their text whenever and wherever they could get an audience together. If he gave them any definite rules for their guidance beyond this, the rules have not been handed down to us.\* The mendicant Orders have preserved their constitutions, which strike one as being almost too elaborate to have proceeded from the original founders of those Orders. The constitution of the Russet Priests may have been from first to last an unwritten law, as simple as the earliest Christian commission on record—"Go into the world and preach the gospel." At any rate that is practically the limit of our knowledge concerning them—with one exception hereafter to be mentioned. We do not know when the first Poor Priest was despatched, nor how many were commissioned, nor where they went, nor what was the measure of their success. We know their work, but not their names. We recognise the tree by its fruits, and the best evidence of their probably life-long labours is to be found in the conspicuous and astonishing vitality of so-called Lollardism throughout the next few generations. The teachings of Wyclif and his missionaries, based upon a simple and familiar treatment of the Bible, which had hitherto been jealously and mysteriously with-

\* See, however, Chapter XIV.

held, sank during these generations so deeply into the popular mind that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries found all England saturated with biblical knowledge. It is marvellous that such widespread results should have left behind them so little visible testimony of the process by which they were brought about.

But indeed the very silence of history as to the personality of Wyclif's Poor Priests, and as to the details of their appointment and mission, is eloquent of the simplicity, the enthusiasm, the single-minded devotion with which they set about their work. Knowledge of and reverence for Holy Writ, an unbleached sheepskin, a broad hat, and a pair of sandals made up their moral and material equipment. Some of them were certainly university men, whilst some had graduated by the side of the master whom they revered, in no other learning than that of "the sacred page." It may be that the more scholarly amongst them carried copies of the Bible, or of the Gospels only, made industriously by their own hands, at Oxford, at London, or at Lutterworth. In the same way they may have taken with them a few of Wyclif's sermons, or notes from the sermons which they had heard him preach. But the humblest of them all, it is very easy to believe, had nothing more than a well-furnished memory, together with a tested power to move the hearts of their fellow-men.

Naturally the first translations made by Wyclif from the Latin Bible were taken in hand some time before the Poor Priests went forth on their mission. It is impossible to fix a date for the beginning of the

work by Wyclif himself, or for its continuation by Nicholas Hereford at Oxford, John Purvey at Lutterworth, and their assistants. Nor would it be easy to say when Wyclif began to write for his contemporaries in English, or what is the date of his earliest English works which we now possess. But as to the motives which led him to translate the Bible for popular use, we are left in no doubt whatever. In a work, *Of the Truth of Holy Scripture*, written soon after his second escape from the hands of Courtenay, and before his English Bible was completed, he puts his case both clearly and fully. God's will, he says, is plainly expressed in the two Testaments taken together. Christ's law suffices for Christ's Church, without requiring the addition or substitution of another priest-made law, and the Christian who understands it has enough for his needs in this world. The direct message and voice of God to man in the words of Holy Writ, without any necessity for an intermediary—this was his "passionate conviction of truth"; and we can understand how such a declaration would shock the conventional orthodoxy of the fourteenth century.

In another place he lays it down that "Christen men and women, olde and young, shulden study fast in the New Testament, and no simple man of wit shulde be aferde unmesurably to study in the text of holy Writ. Pride and covetise of clerks is cause of their blyndnesse and heresie, and priveth them fro verie understanding of holy Writ. The New Testament is of ful autoritie, and open to understanding of simple men, as to the poynts that ben most need-

ful to salvation. The texte of holy Writ ben wordes of everlasting life, and he that kepereth mekenes and charitie hath the trewe understandynge and perfection of all holy Writ. It seemeth open heresy to say that the Gospel with his truth and freedom suffiseth not to salvation of Christen men without kepyng of ceremonies and statutes of sinful men and unkunninge, that ben made in the tyme of Sathanas and Antichrist."

Wyclif, of course, exercised a notable influence on the history of English letters. He had been born into the early renaissance of literature, as well as into the early reformation of religion ; and since he was himself, in each of these two domains, a not inconsiderable part of the epoch through which he lived, a brief glance at the literary aspects of his century may help us to appreciate his position as a pioneer of progress in the creation of the language which we speak and write to-day.

In and about the fourteenth century, English, in common with the other languages of modern Europe, made an important advance towards a definite written form. The central and western tongues had gradually developed themselves out of the interfused vocabularies and grammatical types of the Classical, Celtic, Scandinavian, and German stocks. Men of learning and imagination in Italy, France, Spain, Germany, and England were only just beginning to find free literary expression in the familiar languages which they had been accustomed to use in their domestic and social intercourse. Latin was for the clergy, for philosophers and students; it could

never be a fit medium for modern thought and fancy. And yet, where except in Latin could literary expression be found? "The delicacy," says Hallam, "that distinguishes in words the shades of sentiment, the grace that brings them to the soul of the reader with the charm of novelty united to clearness, could not be attainable in a colloquial jargon." Nor could such a jargon possibly attain to distinction and style where (as in our own country) the speech of the people was not the speech of the Court, the talk of the peasant was not the talk of those who owned the soil, the tongue of men who sought for justice was not the tongue of such as had to administer it. Where was genius to find her niche, until the language of everyday life, the language of the nation and not of the governing race, began to show its predilections, to set up its standard, to attract the notice and favour of men whose imaginations were already on fire and craving for utterance?

Whilst the Schoolmen were struggling bravely but lamely for freedom of religious life and thought, the French writers of *fabliaux*, *pastourelles*, and love songs, followed by the German minnesingers and meistersingers, broke the silence to which poetic souls had long been condemned, and lightly preluded the nobler strains of Dante and Petrarch. Higher elevation of thought and language it was impossible for poet to attain in those days than the height attained by the two devout Florentines, whose poems, religious and even devotional in their tone, largely secularized the mood and phraseology

of religion for the interpretation of human interests and passions. Italy was naturally ahead of other countries in the dignity and suppleness of her new literature, for Italian and the Italians had been hellenised many centuries ago, and the younger race was inheriting the intellectual property of its ancestors. The literature of the northern nations was of slower growth, and their hellenisation was yet to come.

Before the middle of the fourteenth century there was little or nothing in England which could be called literature—no Greek at all, Latin with a mere savour of latinity, and of English no more than a few rude songs, mainly provincial and political, a few still ruder miracle plays, and a handful of hazardous translations from the Latin or French. It is true that as early as 1327 William of Shoreham had made his English version of the Psalms; and not long afterwards the hermit Rolle of Hampole made another version, followed by a didactic poem, *The Pricke of Conscience*. But Wyclif was a middle-aged man before Chaucer—indebted, like himself, to the protection and good-will of the Duke of Lancaster—translated *The Romaunt of the Rose*, and produced, in Anglo-Norman amalgam, *The Court of Love*.

John Wyclif may or may not have had all these English manuscripts, and others which succeeded them, under his notice, at one time or another in his active intellectual life. That he read some of them, the Psalms, the *Pricke of Conscience*, the *Againbite*, the translation of the *Manuel des Péchés*,

and the *Vision of Piers Plowman* is most probable; for copies would surely be at Oxford, and such as were not there he would hardly fail to see in London. It would be rash, however, to assume that the ardent devotee of scholastic theology, the earnest-minded student whose ambition was to earn distinction amongst the secular clergy, the prominent ecclesiastic whose soul was immersed in the stern realities of the day, was attracted to any sort of profane writing outside the limits of religious exposition and devotion. There is little evidence in his own writings of a taste for dealing with lighter topics, or for greater freedom of imagination and treatment. On the other hand, this is not what we should expect to find in connection with the serious controversies in which he was engaged. We know that Wyclif was a bright and pleasant companion in everyday life and at the table, for his enemies twisted it into a charge against him. There is no reason why he should not have read the diverting fables of Sir John Mandeville, or even some of the sugared lays and translations of the courtly Chaucer. It is not out of the bounds of possibility that he should have seen before he died one or more of the stories which Chaucer subsequently collected in the *Canterbury Tales*.

Be this as it may, there is no room for doubting that Wyclif had pored over the manuscripts at Balliol and Merton, and the costly treasures of Bishop Aungerville, better known as Richard de Bury, lately removed for safe keeping to Durham College, hard by Balliol, where two centuries nearer

to our own time the foundations of Trinity were to be laid. In one or other of these calm retreats he would find sundry versions and paraphrases of sacred history, more or less fragmentary, more or less freely rendered by monks or clerks of the northern or western shires, of the midlands or the south-east. One such manuscript, the *Cursor Mundi*, produced about the time of Wyclif's birth, and soon widely popular as a metrical version of Bible history, would certainly be found at Oxford, together with sermons in English, and Scripture stories in verse which were occasionally read in the churches.

Wyclif, it must be confessed, would have fair reason to think that the partial translations of the Bible which had been made up to his own day could be improved upon without much difficulty. When they were not intended as mere service-books, which was the case with the different versions of the Psalms, these Scriptural paraphrases had the character of story-books for diversion. No serious attempt had been made to turn the whole of Scripture, or even the New Testament, into an accurate English equivalent. The prejudice against such a proceeding was too strong to be lightly faced; it was common to all Christendom, and has never been overcome in countries which have adhered to the Latin rite. Wyclif was prepared to face it, but he felt it necessary, as we have seen, to justify and explain his action with considerable deliberation. He cannot have entertained any delusions as to the reception which his English Bible would meet with from the ecclesiastical authorities, and from the seculars and

regulars who prided themselves most upon their orthodoxy. If, as is likely enough, he had nursed the idea of his translation from a comparatively early age, it may well have been that his denunciation as a heretic by the Pope, and Courtenay, and the friars, finally nerved him to carry out his half-formed intentions.

It was a bold venture in every way. Wyclif was more the cleric than the man of letters, and, great as were his services in promoting the formal and academic use of his mother tongue, in clearing and widening the sources of what was soon to become a broad and limpid stream, and in cutting as it were the matrix of the type in which the English Bible was to be printed and perpetuated for all time, there is assuredly no necessity to claim for him the laurels of literary excellence.

That which especially connects Wyclif with the course of English literature and the development of the English language is the fact that the moment of his arrival at maturity—maturity as a man, as a religious thinker, as a political seer, and as a social innovator—coincided with the definitive triumph of the English tongue. Long despised by the Norman Court and aristocracy, from the French queens and their favourites down to the humblest hanger-on of the ruling classes, and equally despised by the clergy, monks, friars, and lawyers, whose debased Latin was their only current coin of speech, the language of our English forefathers suddenly, almost dramatically, stood forth as the dominant tongue in every department of the national life. The formal

re-instatement of English was a jubilee gift which Edward gave to his country in 1362, when Parliament ordered legal pleadings to be conducted in the popular speech, on the ground that French was “much unknown.” The date of this statute may be taken as the first turning-point of the English language and literature, as it was within a little of being the turning-point of religion in England. The change itself, to be sure, had not been so sudden as its formal sanction was striking and authoritative. The mass of the people, it need not be said, had always spoken English—a varying and undigested English, without standard or model for three hundred years, in one part favouring a German type, in another French, and in some cases even tending to a sort of spurious latinisation, but still essentially the English of Alfred and Edward and Harold.

It is impossible without a vigorous effort of the imagination to realise the condition of our ancestors between the middle of the eleventh century and the middle of the fourteenth, divided as they were in heart and sympathy from the ruling race by this most effectual of all barriers, and thrown back upon themselves not only in matters connected with law and government, but also, as it must have been to a very large extent, in religion and social life. Everyone remembers the patriotic complaint, that “children in school, against the use and manner of all other nations, be compelled for to leave their own language and for to construe their lessons and their things in French; and so they have since Normans first came to England.” There must have been the

same jealous feeling in regard to the preference given to the Norman-French at Court, in public offices of all kinds, and in trials at law, as well as to the use of Latin in religious services. It is easy to conceive the wonderful reaction which would follow the adoption of English where French had formerly been used, and the definite recognition of the national tongue for almost every public purpose. And nowhere would the reaction and relief be greater than in the religious domain, when Wyclif's Poor Priests brought the gospel home to the poor, and "monkish Latin" gave place to the English Bible.

Wyclif's prose was a little more scholastic than Mandeville's, and takes more of an academic character from the original text out of which it was translated. It is true that Mandeville's work is a translation, as he expressly states, for he seems to have made his first observations in Latin. "Ye shall understand," he says, "that I have put this book out of Latin into French, and translated it again out of French into English, that every man of my nation may understand it." But a version from the Latin Vulgate was not likely to be so free or supple as a traveller's version from his own Latin text.

Before taking a few samples of Wyclif's English, it may be interesting to quote a short passage from *The Voiage and Travaille* of Mandeville, in order that the style of these two pioneers of written prose may be compared. Evidently the language which they wrote was the familiar language spoken by educated Englishmen of their day, with this distinc-

tion, that the writers were three-tongued men, who more or less pedantically used new-fangled words from the Latin and French, whereas the English speakers who knew no Latin would allow a marked predominance to French or to English types, according to their descent and early associations.

"For als moche," Mandeville writes, "as it is longe tyme passed that there was no generalle passage ne vyage over the see, and many men desiren for to here speke of the holy lond, and han therof gret solace and comfort; I John Maundevylle, Knyght, alle be it I be not worthi, that was born in Englond, in the town of Seynt Albones, passede the see in the year of our Lord Jhesu Christ MCCCXXII, in the day of Seynt Michelle; and hidreto have ben longe tyme over the see, and have seyn and gon thorghe manye dyverse londes, and many provynces and kingdomes and iles . . . where dwellen many dyverse folkes, and of dyverse maneres and lawes, and of dyverse schappes of men."

It is almost entirely a matter of spelling whether this language is plain and simple to us or not. In most essentials the three-tongued men of the fourteenth century spoke and wrote the colloquial speech of to-day.

Wyclif's Bible, though it occupied several hands, is fairly homogeneous throughout. Probably the whole of it passed under his review; and moreover the complete text was subsequently revised by Purvey, who had been his fellow-worker from the beginning. But we are most certain to find Wyclif's English in the Gospels, which were his special and

original charge. In them alone we shall find sufficient evidence, apart from external knowledge, that the Wyclif Bible was translated from the Latin Vulgate, that the translator had at least some little acquaintance, if only at second hand, with Greek, that his constant aim was to make his version clear and simple for the simplest English folk, that with this aim he added glosses where it occurred to him that the text required them, that his vocabulary was plentifully recruited from the French, though to nothing like the same degree as the language of his contemporary Chaucer, and that so far as Wyclif's English was provincial it had certain characteristic elements of the Northern dialect. There is also a distinct impression of pedantry in Wyclif, beyond what we find in the prose works of Chaucer and Mandeville—though the *Tale of Melibeus* and the introduction to the *Voiage and Travaille* are quite pedantic enough to have been written by theologians. Wyclif is extremely literal, and nurses the Latin constructions of the Vulgate, at the cost of occasional vagueness. All these points are illustrated in the following passages—in which the only modernisation of spelling is the use of the later characters *g, gh, th, v, and y.*

“ And Marye seyde, My soule worschipe the Lord, and my spirit joide in God myn heelpe.

“ For he lokide the mekenes of his hondmayden ;  
Io forwhi of that, blisful me schulyen seyn alle gen-  
eracions.

“ For he hath do to me grete thingis that mighti  
is, and his name holy.

" And the mercy of him fro kinredis into kynredis,  
to tho that dreeden him.

" He dyde myght in his arm ; he scateride the  
proude fro the thought of his herte.

" He putte doun the myghti of seete, and he  
higheude the meke.

" The hungrynge he fillide with goodis, and the  
riche he lefte empty.

" He resseyvede Israel his child ; he thoughte of  
his mercy.

" As he spak to oure fadris, to Abraham and to  
his seed into worldis."

" And he, gon out, biganne to preche, and diffame,  
*or publishe*, the word."

" He blasfemeth ; who may forgeve synnes, no-but  
God alone ? The whiche thing anoon knownen by  
the Holy Ghost, for thei thoughten so withinne hem-  
self, Jhesus seith to hem, what thenken yee these  
thingis in youre hertis ? "

" And whenne he passide, he saw Levi Alfey  
sittynge at the tolbothe, and he seith to hym, Sue  
thou me. And he rysynge suede hym."

" No man seweth a pacche of *rude or newe* clothe  
to an old clothe, ellis he takith awey the *newe* sup-  
plement, *or pacche*, and a more brekyng is maad.  
And no man sendith *newe* wyn in to *oolde botelis*,  
*or wyn vesselis*, ellis the *wyn* shal berste the *wyn*  
*vesselis*, and the *wyn* shal be held out."

" And thei hav nat roote in hemself, but thei ben  
temporal, *that is, lasten a lityl tyme* ; afterward tribu-  
lacioun srongen up, and persecucioun for the word,  
anoon thei ben sclaudrid."

"As a corn of seneveye, the which whann it is sowun in the erthe is lesse than alle seedis that ben in erthe; and whanne it is bredd, *or quykened*, it stygheth up in to a tree, and is maad more than alle wortis, *or erbis*; and it shal make grete braunchis, so that briddis of hevene mowe dwelle undir the shadewe therof."

"Sothly Jhesus resceyved hym nat, but seith to hym, Go thou in to thin hous to thine, and telle to hem how many thingis the Lord hath don to thee, and hadde mercy of thee. And he wente forth, and bigan for to preche in Decapoly, *that is, a cuntree of ten citees.*"

"Yit him spekyng, messengeris camen to the prince of synagoge, seyinge, For thi doughtir is deed; what traveilist thou the maistir ferthere? Forsothe the word herd that was seide, Jhesus seith to the prince of the synagoge, Nyle thou drede, oonly byleve thou."

"And anon he spek with hem, and seide to hem, Triste ye, I am; nyle ye drede."

"And aftir sixe dayes Jhesus took Petre, and James, and John, and ledith hem by hem selve aloone in to an high hil; and he is transfigurid byfore hem. And his clothis ben maad schynynge and white ful moche as snow, and which maner clothis a fullere, *or walkere of cloth*, may not make white on erthe. And Helye with Moyses apperide to hem, and thei weren spekyng with Jhesu."

"Forsothe of the fyge tree lerne ye the parable. Whanne now his braunche schal be tendre, and leevys ben sprongen out, ye witen for somer is in the nexte.

keepeth that divinity to himself”]. The Church consists only of such as are predestinated. The Church had no immovable goods before the time of Constantine ; and it is no sacrilege for the State to take for its own needs the temporal goods of the Church. There is a savour of hypocrisy in the beautiful buildings and decorations of the Church. Tithes are to be considered as pure alms, and ought not to be extorted by censures ; parishioners would do well not to pay tithe at all to dissolute priests. Whatever is not plainly expressed and enjoined in the Scriptures is irrelevant and impertinent. Many of the ecclesiastical teachers since the completion of the first millennium of Christianity were heretical. It is vain for laymen to bargain for the prayers of priests. There is no superiority in set prayers repeated by a priest ; men should trust rather in personal holiness. The alms of the Church should be refused to persons living in open sin.

With regard to the sacraments, it was alleged against Wyclif that he spoke slightly of the act of chrism, and denied the absolute necessity of baptism, which, he said, does not confer grace, but only symbolises a grace given before. It is idolatry to worship the host ; the bread and wine remain just what they were before consecration. God could not make his natural body exist in two places at once. Confirmation is not necessary to salvation. Confession of sins to a priest is superfluous for a contrite man. Extreme unction is unnecessary, and not a sacrament.

All kinds of religious Orders confound the unity of the Church of Christ, who instituted but one

Order, the Order of service. Vows of virginity are a doctrine of devils; and the worship of saints borders on idolatry. It is needless to visit the shrines of saints; the miracles alleged to be performed there may be only delusions of the devil. It is lawful to appeal in ecclesiastical matters and matters of faith to the secular prince. All dominion is founded on grace, and God divests of all right the rulers who abuse their power. Christ was a man, and his manhood should receive the kind of worship which is known as "*latreia*"—that is, the worship of service and observance. God loved David and Peter as deeply when they grievously sinned as he does now, when they are possessed of glory. God gives no good things to his enemies; and he is not more willing to reward the good than he is to punish the wicked. All things come to pass by a fatal necessity. God could not have made the world other than it is made; and he cannot make that which is something return to nothing—a fatalism which leads up to the paradox that God must "obey" the devil.

It is evident in how many points Wyclif set up a standard for the Reformers who came after him, and especially for the Calvinists, Presbyterians, and Puritans. The reader will not need to be reminded that some of the opinions ascribed to him by those who considered him a dangerous heretic may be no more than their own interpretation of his casual expression of opinion, whilst all of them, as quoted above, are torn from their context, and not one of them could be accepted as accurate without verification.

from Wyclif's own writings. Even without such a deduction in his favour from the allegations of Netter, there is very little in the record which was not frankly adopted and endorsed by the Reformed Church in the sixteenth century ; but, if the common belief of Romanists in the fourteenth century is taken as the standard of orthodoxy, then no doubt Wyclif's opinions must be admitted to have been steeped in the rankest heresy. And, even if we agree with every one of the conclusions attributed to him, our judgment to-day might be fairly expressed in the terms employed by the University of Oxford in response to Pope Gregory's bull—that the conclusions are true, and essentially orthodox, but framed in such a way as to leave room for misconceptions.

The denial of transubstantiation was the special cause of proceedings taken against the Reformer in 1381 and 1382, of which we shall have to speak further on. It is, however, pertinent to the present phase of his development—in the years 1378 to 1380—to quote what was said of him by Wodeford, whose words are cited by Dr. Shirley from a Latin manuscript in the Bodleian Library. “So long as Wyclif was ‘*sententiarius*,’ and even ‘*baccalaureus responsalis*,’\* he openly and in the schools maintained that, although the sacramental accidents rested upon some substance, yet in the act of consecration the material bread had ceased to exist.

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\* “*Sententiarius*,” one who lectured on the “*Sentences*,” so as to qualify for the degree of B.D. “*Baccalaureus responsalis*,” a B.D. of two years’ standing. So far as is known, Wyclif was a B.D. as early as 1363.

Pressed by many questions as to what was the subject of those accidents, he began by replying, for some considerable time, that it was ‘a mathematical body.’ Later on, in consequence of many arguments urged against this, he would reply that he did not know what was the substance of the accidents; but he was firm as to their resting upon some substance. Now (that is, in 1381) in his conclusions and in his confession he expressly declares that the bread remains after the consecration, and that it is the substance of the accidents.”

Nothing, surely, could be more eloquent of the moral struggle through which Wyclif had been passing, and was yet to pass, on a subject which has in all ages been the most searching and serious that can possibly engage the mind of a devout Christian transcendentalist. He had begun his life, so soon as his reasoning faculties had asserted themselves, with the familiar “late Roman” separation of the accidents from the substance or subject. For him, however, the essence of the sacrament was in the words of Christ, and in the act of faith which enabled him to see the body and blood of Christ; but, if he saw, it was with the eye of faith, and not with the physical sight. That was his first step—and already he was a heretic in comparison with those who declared that they saw a physical Christ with physical sight. The man of comfortable faith looked upon the bread and reverently declared: “I see no bread—it has gone though it has not disappeared. I see the physical body of Christ, wearing the shape of bread; but it is only because of my infirmity that it

seems to be what it is not—seems to be wheaten bread when it is actually and really my Lord and God."

To Wyclif, even as a young man, this savoured of idolatry. In vain his friends would assure him that it was no idolatry, but the very sublimity of faith. "I grant," he began by saying, "that the substance is altered. The '*hoc est corpus*' enables me to see the body of Christ—a spiritual body, seen with spiritual eyes. But what, then, do I see with my physical sight? I am a realist; I see a body, with attributes and mathematical dimensions—but what body? No longer a mathematical body, you say, if the consecration has annihilated all the mathematical and physical qualities of wheaten bread? Then I cannot tell you what the body is, but sure I am that a body is there. To say that it is physically God is idolatry. To say, as some of us do, that what I see and handle are accidents without a subject is only another way of saying that the '*hoc est corpus*', which made Christ visible to the eye of faith, also made that wheaten bread into something infinitely inferior in the scale of nature—lower than the peasant's bean-bread, lower than the soil in which the grain of wheat germinated; for they have substance as well as accidents, but this unhappy phenomenon retains its accidents after losing its substance."

Such, in part, was to be his reasoning in 1381, when he had pronounced his "eureka," and committed himself to what was deemed the most pestilent of his heresies. In 1378, when he came back to Oxford to ruminate on the meaning and the riddle of his

life—condemned by the Pope, condemned by the Primate and the Bishop of London, a byword amongst the monks and friars, distrusted henceforth by all who looked to Pope and bishops as authoritative exponents of the faith—he had not yet brought himself to utter the answer which must have trembled on his lips. But there, in the home of his youth and manhood, he nursed the secret of his soul. He taught in the schools with increasing zeal, preached and wrote in English, at Oxford and at Lutterworth, with feverish activity, and passed, perhaps, some of the happiest and yet the saddest moments of his life with the friends who loved him so well—with Nicholas Hereford and Laurence Bedenham, with Rygge and Repyngdon, with John Aston and Flemmyng, with John Purvey, William Jamys, and many others. They used to call him Johannes Augustini, as well as the Evangelical Doctor, and they were brave enough to bear with him the suspicion and obloquy which were his lot. But the worst days of his persecution were yet to come.

It is told of Jamys that in a sermon before Chancellor Berton—somewhat later than the time we are now considering—he made use of the expression, “There is no idolatry if not in the sacrament of the altar.” Whereon the Chancellor broke in with a sarcastic comment. “*Fam loqueris ut philosophus!*”—“Now you are talking like the philosopher!” And if Wyclif was present, doubtless the eyes of all were turned upon him, for they knew whose feather had impelled that shaft. The story is sometimes told as referring to Rygge instead of Berton, in which

case the Chancellor's remark would bear another meaning. But it is unlikely that a Chancellor would have broken into a public discourse with emphatic approval of a statement which must have given offence to many of the congregation.

It was in every way a stirring and creative time. The papal Schism had thrown all Christendom into extraordinary ferment, and men had scarcely ranged themselves on their respective sides. It was not until near the end of 1379, eighteen months after the Neapolitan Archbishop and the French Cardinal had placed their rival claims before the Western Churches, that England definitely declared for Urban; but to support the pretensions of one Pope in preference to those of another was not sufficient to set the mind at rest concerning the very disturbing fact of the Schism itself. Wyclif, in common with many a devout Christian at that crisis, was very deeply affected by the events which were occurring day by day.

In connection with the sympathy felt for Wyclif by his own University, it would of course be a mistake to suppose that he was primarily or principally responsible for Oxford's departures from orthodoxy in the fourteenth century. To think that would be to make nothing of the influence of other inquiring minds amongst the Schoolmen, the lay graduates, and even the friars. We have seen already that there were some very liberal-minded men amongst the Franciscans in particular; and as a matter of fact we find traces of "grievous errors" at Oxford before Wyclif came to maturity, and even before he

was born. If some of these errors were identical with errors that Wyclif subsequently held, the fair conclusion is that he imbibed them at Oxford as part of the mental sustenance which had proved to be best adapted to his intellectual growth and needs.

Archbishop Langham (1366-1368), who had been a monk, and was notoriously hostile to the mendicant Orders, wrote in the course of his primacy a disciplinary letter to Oxford in which he drew attention to the unsound views at that time current in the University. He mentioned a number of these—as that the baptism of infants is not a necessity for salvation; that no one could justly suffer damnation for original sin alone, without the re-inforcement of wilful sin after birth; that there is a sufficient “remedy in nature” for the sins of true believers; that no one could be justly deprived of his heavenly inheritance for sins committed without a clear vision of God; that every human being has at least one clear vision of God before his death; that mere prohibition of an act is not sufficient to constitute the commission of that act a sin; that the Father in himself is finite, the Son finite, and the Holy Ghost alone infinite; that God cannot annihilate his creatures, or make something into nothing; that God cannot be a tormentor; that even Mary and the saints are still liable to sin and damnation; that, conversely, the damned are capable of salvation; that future punishments will not be everlasting; and that God could not create an absolutely impeccable being.

It is manifest that some of these tenets, sound or unsound, are at least as old as Christianity, whilst

one or two belong to the class of what may be called logical hyperbole. Certainly Wyclif held many or most of them, but it is equally certain that he would have condemned others. There is indeed a strain of greater optimism in these earlier Oxford heresies than Wyclif's mood and experience permitted him to entertain. He was a predestinarian, a believer in that "foreknowledge" of damnation which so easily becomes foredooming to damnation. He believed so strongly in the potency of evil that he thought God himself was constrained by it, and accordingly he could scarcely hold that punishment was other than everlasting. These important points of divergence should be borne in mind by and by, when we come to the melancholy stage at which many of the Reformer's disciples fell away from him.

Wyclif's return to Oxford in 1378 coincided, by a curious chance, with a discovery made by certain devout Christians at Dundalk, that the bones of his old friend and master Fitzralph were endowed with the power of working miracles. He had expressed a general opinion that miracles of this kind, wrought at the tombs of the saints, were not unlikely to be delusions of the devil; but we may be sure that if he thought them possible in any case he would be disposed to accept the testimony of the pious in regard to the doughty old Archbishop of Armagh—the Armachanus who was already a great authority at Oxford when Wyclif went up, and who certainly left his mark on Wyclif's character and opinions. Wyclif speaks of him with affection and reverence, and evidently accepted from him as a bequest not

merely his ideas of divine lordship but also his controversial antagonism to the friars.

The report of the Dundalk miracles, then, would come just in time to stimulate old enmity, to add fuel to the fire which had been kindled afresh by the papal bulls. The friars are said to have been much troubled by the report in question, for everyone knew how bitterly Fitzralph had opposed them, even at the Court of Avignon; and clearly, if he were accepted as a saint and a miracle-worker, there would be an ugly inference against themselves in the minds of the faithful. Of course they did not believe in the miracles, and it may be that they expressed themselves a little too plainly on the subject of their old enemy. Still nothing of this sort was needed to widen the breach between the four Orders and the man whom they had twice so nearly succeeded in crushing. An opportunity came which they might have turned to good account by effecting at least a partial reconciliation with their antagonist; but they attempted to get too much out of it, and the only consequence was that they made matters worse than ever.

Early in 1379 Wyclif had a severe and even dangerous illness. It may have been the result of the great mental and physical strain which had been put upon him in the previous year; and perhaps it was attended by certain premonitory symptoms of the collapse which was soon to overtake him. However that may be, he was thought to be at the end of his tether; and when the friars knew how hard it was going with him they resolved upon a curious course of proceeding.

Each of the four prominent Orders, Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Augustinians, nominated a friar, being also a regent or doctor in divinity, to take part in a deputation to the dying heretic; and they took with them, not the viaticum, or any other of the consolations of religion, or even a skilled leech, but simply four aldermen of the city of Oxford. It is certainly not easy to understand the presence of those aldermen, unless they came with a genuine message of condolence, and the coincidence of their visit with that of the friars was merely accidental.

They began by wishing the sick man good health and a speedy recovery—and then told him that he was on the point of death, and asked him for a retraction of the hard things which he had said against them in his lifetime. It is impossible to fill in the details of what must have been a highly dramatic interview. If we even knew the names of the friars, it might assist us to a better understanding of the real object of their visit. It is doubtful if Wyclif was in a condition to answer them in the first instance, for he was too weak to raise himself in his bed. His visitors were thus able, without let or hindrance, to remind him of the heavy blows which he had dealt them, by word and writing; and they entreated him in his last moments, in presence of these worthy aldermen who might attest what he said, to display his penitence by formally withdrawing his charges against the Orders.

It was a bold thing to ask, even of a dying man; but it seemed to be just the stimulus which Wyclif

wanted to enable him to throw off his lethargy. The emaciated frame and the lustreless eyes must have taken sudden fire from the soul within, for we are told that he called his servants to his side, ordered them to raise him on his pillows, and then cried out with unexpected vigour, "I will not die but live, and I will show up the evil deeds of the friars!"

He did live, for more than five years thereafter, and both he and the Orders gave and received many hard knocks. His first and main quarrel was with the false teaching and usurped authority of Rome; but he could never come to terms with the religious professors who had forsaken the rule of poverty in order to live delicately, to exercise dominion, to amass wealth, and to keep for themselves what had been given to them in trust for the poor. This is the note which prevails throughout his writings in relation to the mendicant Orders, and which he enforces in a hundred different ways.

Much of what Wyclif wrote, especially in his longer and more argumentative works, is almost unreadable for men and women of the present day, and serviceable perhaps for nothing so much as the elucidation of his character and work. After the lapse of five complete centuries, in every year of which the effect of his stainless and courageous life has been continuously operative in the cause of religious freedom, what the world wants to see and feel is not so much the quality of his controversial logic, or the exact conclusiveness of his somewhat ponderous and involved arguments—for which at

best we are dependent on manifestly corrupt texts, —as the moral lineaments and effective force of the man himself. We want to know and be familiar with the John Wyclif who, in the days of our childhood was little more to any of us than the shadow of a great name: the John Wyclif who was Chaucer's contemporary under the Plantagenet kings; who in the Middle Ages of history moved as a star across the dark firmament of western Europe; a Schoolman, and yet a teacher of the most accepted Christianity of to-day. We want to feel sure, and we are only just beginning to feel it, that the man to whom every lover of truth is so largely indebted stands before us as a recognised presence and identity, in his form and substance as he lived; the brilliant Oxford man who paced the pavements of the schools, or haunted the streets and meadows between his college and the silver streams, passing the very spot where, two centuries later, bishops such as his soul would have loved were to light a candle for the faith as he believed it; the eager, busy optimist who threw himself into the eddies of English politics, hoping against hope that the secular arm would strike effectively where he saw such urgent need; the pale, weak priest, with firm-set lips and undaunted eyes, to whom the re-discovered truth was a mastering reality, far above the authority of Rome or the claims of tradition.

To read the controversial works of Wyclif without some such intimate and sympathetic realisation of his character is to make no near approach to a knowledge of the man, and very little towards the

comprehension of his life-work. To the merely critical mind, for instance, which is governed by our actual canons of literary taste and amenity, and forgets to transpose the language of the fourteenth century into the same key with that of the nineteenth, the tone occasionally adopted by Wyclif in his later years against the Papacy and the religious Orders may well seem to pass the bounds of moderation.

One or two quotations have already been given from the sermons of Wyclif in which the unworthiness of Christian professors was severely castigated. Other discourses will be found in the same collection which were written after the Schism, in some of which the writer declares his belief that the friars are mainly actuated by greed, and that they would easily change from Urban to Clement if such a course were likely to be more profitable. In another sermon he charges them with obstructing the Poor Priests, who interfered with their gains. In the *Vae Octuplex*, which is found in all the best manuscripts of Wyclif's sermons, and has always been attributed to him, the eight woes pronounced against the Scribes and Pharisees are brought home to the Church of the second millennium, and especially to the friars. This indeed is Wyclif's prevailing note in all his denunciations — that the errors of the Church have invaded her only "since the fiend was loosed."

Under the lash of such a tongue, no wonder if the friars, the monks and the wealthier clergy had become at first restive, then indignant, then bitterly

and vindictively hostile to the most uncompromising of their censors. His invective was certainly not of the mildest kind, and even his friends have occasionally lamented the stern and sweeping character of the charges which he brought against the regular and higher secular clergy. Wyclif himself would have admitted that there were priests, regulars, and perhaps even bishops who did not deserve to be branded as corrupt. A man of milder (perhaps less effective) temperament might have dwelt upon these exceptions, and have been more on his guard against the misconceptions which arose out of his too comprehensive reproaches. Possibly it never occurred to him to say anything so fatuous as that the censure of greed and hypocrisy must not be held to apply to such as are neither greedy nor hypocritical. The fourteenth century, it must be remembered, was not a time of mincing words, halting controversies, and compromises which sacrifice nine points of a just demand in order to secure the tenth. Wyclif was thoroughly a man of his century—a leader and a pioneer, it is true, but still a man of limited knowledge, only half liberated from the scholastic yoke, conventional in his dialectical methods, and one who was too much attached to logical precision—and perhaps to logical hyperbole—to think much of the weaker and illogical minds which would be disturbed by his confident conclusions.

It is natural that a secular clergyman holding such views as Wyclif held, and expressing them with increasing freedom during the last few years of his life, should have been charged with the very offences

against which he most indignantly protested. His enemies did not fail to say that his rage against the monks and friars was not very pronounced until Archbishop Langham in 1366 had deprived him of the wardenship of Canterbury Hall, and put back the regulars in place of the seculars—events which, in all probability, had no reference at all to our John Wyclif. In any case the question would seem to be not so much when Wyclif's rage was hottest as whether he was hot with good reason.

Another accusation brought against him by the friars and their friends, after he was dead, represented him as having tried in vain to secure a nomination to the see of Worcester—the inference being that his attacks upon the wealthy clergy who misused their wealth, and upon the rapidly increasing endowments of the Church, grew out of this check to his worldly ambitions. No candid reader of the life and writings of Wyclif will give a second thought to these charges of hypocrisy and greed, stamped as they are by their patent absurdity.

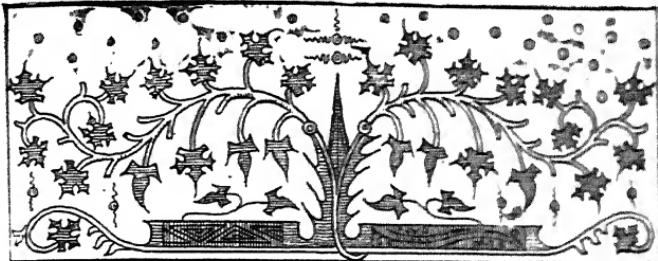
To admit that the Reformer's hostility to the abuses of the monastic system, and his condemnation of a wealthy priesthood, were not openly displayed until he had felt the smart of personal disappointment would be to ignore the note of continuity which is manifest throughout his intellectual history. If there is any force at all in what has been said of Wyclif's mental and moral descent from the liberal Schoolmen, and especially from his immediate predecessor William of Ockham, it follows as a matter of course that he began his career

as a clergyman with a profound belief in the doctrine of evangelical poverty, and did not wait until he was more than forty years old before he gave it public utterance. At any rate his tongue was specially unloosed against the friars after the death of Fitzralph in 1360; and though, like the Archbishop of Armagh, he had never held the extreme doctrine of evangelical poverty as it stood condemned in the decretals—based on the assertion that Christ himself had begged instead of working for his living—still his advance on Fitzralph's position was enough to prove that Wyclif was not fishing for preferment. To say, as his greatest enemies said, that he inherited the damnable doctrines of Marsiglio was to say that he was in sympathy with the Fraticelli and the Brotherhood of Munich, that he accepted from his boyhood the whole theory of a spiritual Church, free from worldly titles or claims, and that the logical indefensibility of Church endowments was one of the grounding principles of his belief.

If other reasons were needed to show how untenable is the notion that Wyclif began to condemn endowments in 1363 or 1368—the see of Worcester fell vacant at both these dates,—because he had angled for a bishopric without success, it might be enough to point out that his actions and utterances, so far as we are acquainted with them, were consistently of such a character as to militate against the chance of his receiving any sort of preferment in the Church; that his association with John of Gaunt, who had been credited with a desire to spoliate the Church, would have been the last thing to suggest

itself to an orthodox clergyman in search of a mitre; that, on the other hand, his attendance upon the King, the repute of his preaching in London, his dealings with the Duke of Lancaster and the Prince of Wales, the frequent recourse of Parliament to his opinion and advice, say between 1366 and 1380, would have sufficed to obtain him a bishopric if he had been laying himself out to secure one—if he had economised his liberalism instead of speaking his mind and eventually disregarding the wishes of the Duke on a question of principle; and that, in point of fact, when the sinecure prebend of Aust was conferred upon him in 1375, on his return from Bruges, he conscientiously declined it.

The friars, as we shall see, had by no means shot their last bolt; but up to the year 1380, at any rate, Wyclif had the best of the argument in every sense. The comparative success of his attack upon the Roman system in England, as well as upon the alien Orders and the national hierarchy, is sufficiently accounted for by the organic weakness of Rome in the fourteenth century, by the patriotic resistance of Englishmen to encroachments from a vassal of France, and by the revulsion of public feeling against ecclesiastical and monastic scandals. Historians who were prejudiced in favour of the papal cause—and it is to be remembered that men like Netter, Harpsfield, and even the Dominicans who confuted Wyclif after his death, had the making of his history in their own hands—admit that the provisions and other exactions of Rome went a long way towards ensuring him the measure of success which he actually gained.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONDEMNED AT OXFORD.



HE time had come when Wyclif had reached his last stage of heresy, and he made up his mind to declare boldly against the miraculous and non-natural element in the sacrament of the altar. After many meanders, as we have seen above, the Reformer found himself at the centre of the labyrinth, with his doubts resolved and his resolution taken.

According to Netter of Walden, he began to lecture at Oxford against the doctrine of transubstantiation ("incepit determinare materiam") in the summer of 1381; but the actual date of the inquiry which was held in this year by Chancellor Berton, at the instance of the archbishop and bishops, is somewhat in doubt. Easter, as Dr. Shirley points out in deal-

ing with this subject, fell in 1381 on April 14th; and the Confession which was written by Wyclif after the inquiry had been held bears the date of May 10th. Perhaps the four weeks between these dates leaves time for all that is recorded as having happened. The inquiry itself was very much in the nature of a foregone conclusion. The issue of the condemnation under the Chancellor's seal, its promulgation in Wyclif's presence, the appeal to John of Gaunt and his response, with the writing of Wyclif's rejoinder, may certainly have happened within a month, and are scarcely likely to have been dragged out over thirteen months.

The articles attributed to Wyclif, for which the Chancellor called him to account, were these:

1. The consecrated host which we see upon the altar is not Christ, nor any part of him, but an efficacious prefigurement of him.

2. No partaker can see Christ in the consecrated host with his physical eyesight, though he may do so with the eye of faith.

3. The faith of the Roman Church was expressed of old in the declaration of Berengarius, that the bread and wine which remain after the benediction are the consecrated host.

4. By virtue of the sacramental words, the eucharist contains the body and blood of Christ in a true and real sense, down to the minutest particular.

5. Transubstantiation, identification, and impanation—terms which have been given to the eucharistic symbols—have no foundation in Scripture.

6. It is contrary to the opinion of the holy fathers to maintain that there may be an accident without a substance in the host.

7. The sacrament of the eucharist is in its nature bread or wine, containing, by virtue of the sacramental words, the true body and blood of Christ, down to the minutest particular.

8. The sacrament of the eucharist is in figure the body and blood of Christ, existing by conversion of the bread or wine, whereof something definite remains after consecration, although, so far as concerns the faithful, it has been exhausted ("sopitum").

9. There is no foundation for saying that an accident exists without a substance, for in that case God is reduced to nothing, and a distinct article of the Christian faith disappears.

10. Every person or sect is infected with heresy who obstinately maintains that the sacrament of the altar is mere bread (*per se existens*), decidedly lower in nature and less perfect than "*panis equinus*."

11. Everyone who obstinately maintains that the said sacrament is an accident, a quality, quantity, or the aggregate of these, falls into the like heresy.

12. Wheaten bread, with which alone it is lawful to celebrate, is decidedly more perfect in nature than bread made of beans or rats' flesh, either of which is more perfect in the scale of nature than a simple accident.

In addition to these contentions, Wyclif was charged before the Chancellor with maintaining that the body of Christ could not be multiplied in regard to its dimensions or its limits, though he ad-

mitted that it might be multiplied in a virtual sense, as He can be said to be present in every part of his kingdom. It was quite possible, he said, that the bread might be converted and yet remain the same bread—just as the paschal lamb remains a lamb when it is made a sacrament and figure of Christ. The bread becomes Christ figuratively, virtually, and tropically, but not corporeally, or even with the body which Christ now wears in heaven.\* It is more accurate to say that Wyclif defined transubstantiation than to say that he denied it.

That some of these ideas, or the manner in which they are stated and illustrated, should have shocked both such as had not thought the question out and such as, having thought it out, would have preferred that Wyclif should have shown himself a little more squeamish in dealing with it, is not to be wondered at. Amongst the latter may have been Dr. Rygge—if this member of Berton's Council is to be identified with the future Chancellor; which seems, indeed, a little improbable. But, if it were so, he would not by any means be the only prominent man of his day whom Wyclif contrived to win over from the ranks of his enemies.

The inquiry into Wyclif's new teaching was held by the Chancellor and twelve doctors in the Augus-

\* Wyclif, said S. T. Coleridge, "was much sounder and more truly Catholic in his view of the Eucharist than Luther. And I find, not without much pleasure, that my own view of it, which I was afraid was original, was maintained in the tenth century—that is to say, that the body broken had no reference to the human body of Christ, but to the *kara noumenon*, or symbolical body, the Rock that followed the Israelites."—(*Table Talk.*)

tinian schools, where Wyclif himself attended, and maintained his opinions with his usual vigour. The doctors in question were Lawndreyn and Rygge, professors of the "sacred page," Mowbray, a doctor of canon and civil law, Gascoyne, a doctor of decretals, Crump, of the Benedictines, with John Wells from the abbey at Ramsey, three Preaching Friars, Chessam, Bruscombe, and Wolverton, the Franciscan Tyssyngton, Shipton of the Augustinians, and Lovey of the Carmelites.

The Chancellor's decision was given with the unanimous consent of his twelve advisers. It does not contain Wyclif's name, but selects for special condemnation these two contentions—that the substance of material bread and wine remains after consecration, and that the body and blood of Christ are not essentially, substantially, and corporeally present in the sacrament, but only figuratively or tropically. These "pestiferous" errors the judgment emphatically condemns, and a solemn monition—*primo, secundo, tertio, et districtius*—is launched in the usual canonical terms, to the effect that no man thereafter should openly teach or defend those conclusions, or either of them, in the schools or outside, within the University of Oxford, under pain of imprisonment, suspension from all his offices, and the major excommunication.

Wyclif is said to have been disconcerted by this condemnation and threat; but no actual sign of confusion is mentioned. On the contrary, he sat in his chair and listened to the decision, and after it had been read out he contended that neither the

Chancellor nor any of his colleagues had been able to break down his argument. Truly a pertinacious heretic, as Netter says of him in this connection !

Nevertheless it must have been a very unwelcome fact for the Reformer and his friends that he should have been condemned, even in this indirect fashion, by the Chancellor of the university with which he was so closely associated, and where he was held in such high honour by a majority of masters and students. The effect of the condemnation must have been greatly weakened by the evident unfairness of putting six friars and two monks on a committee of twelve, selected by a secular clergyman, to inquire into the orthodoxy of a man who on independent grounds had had so many passages of arms with the regular clergy. The University at large appears to have taken this view somewhat decidedly ; and thereafter, for at least another twelve-month, the authority of Wyclif amongst his Oxford adherents was greater than ever. Some of them, no doubt, fell away from their allegiance when they found that the authorities were going against him, but he clearly had a strong party up to the middle of 1382. The successor of Berton in the chancellorship was a friend of Wyclif's, Robert Rygge, and no doubt the state of public feeling influenced the selection of a Wycliffite. It should be mentioned that Berton was subsequently credited with having approximated in some measure to the position of the man whom he had condemned.

Wyclif himself had no idea of sitting down calmly under a condemnation pronounced by his personal

enemies, and by a Chancellor who had plainly gone beyond the sentiment of the University. He did not affect to treat the decision as impersonal, and therefore one that might be safely ignored. He took it home to himself, and went to the length of addressing a direct appeal to the Crown.

It was the natural and proper appeal under the circumstances. Berton had conducted the inquiry and pronounced his decision as Chancellor, and in the exercise of his authority on a question of university teaching and discipline. His judgment, indeed, was scarcely equitable, and at any rate it strangely jumbled together the academic and the ecclesiastical functions. Berton, like Wyclif, was a secular priest and a regent of divinity, but in both respects the Reformer was senior to the other by several years. The talk of excommunication, however, was only a threat; the effectiveness of the judgment was in its prohibition of certain teaching; and it was against this prohibition that Wyclif rightly appealed from the Chancellor to the Crown. He was, in fact, simply acting in conformity with the royal decree of 1366, and with the consistent claim of the University to be independent in its own sphere of bishops as well as of popes.

At any rate the appeal reached the King's Council; and it is stated by one authority that John of Gaunt himself brought the answer down to Oxford. What was the answer? Was Wyclif still so far potent with the Court as to obtain a technical victory over Berton and the twelve doctors? That would make it easier to understand the temporary removal or withdrawal

of the Chancellor, and the elaborate treatises in which Berton himself, Tyssyngton, and others proceeded to combat the views of Wyclif when the Committee of Doctors had failed to silence him. Either the success or the rejection of the appeal would be consistent with the action of the Duke of Lancaster, who is said to have enjoined his friend not to speak further of the new question which he had raised.

It is impossible to help smiling at the magniloquent phrase which Netter, the confessor of Henry V., applies to the grandfather of his monarch in this connection. Hitherto he has had no good word for John of Gaunt, but rather the contrary. Now that the Duke has begun to grow cool towards the heresiarch, he is styled *nobilis dominus dux egregius, et miles strenuus, sapiensque consiliarius Dux Lancastriæ, sacrae ecclesiæ filius fidelis*. The corrector of William Courtenay and William of Wykeham would scarcely have recognised himself under such a legend.

There is no doubt that by this time John of Gaunt was exhibiting far less zeal in the cause which he formerly had so much at heart. He may have found the Church directly and indirectly a good deal stronger than he expected. He may have foreseen that he would need the help of the hierarchy in other and more attractive schemes which were forming themselves in his mind. And observe, by the way, that it was the influence of the Church which set the crown on the head of his son in 1399, and would have set it on his own head if he had lived to the age of sixty. At all events he must have found that to govern through the mother and the Council of the

young King was by no means so easy as it had been to govern in the name of his doting father. Be the reason what it may, he had begun to conciliate and flatter the prelates, without in any way regaining thereby the popularity which he had lost amongst the masses of Englishmen. So far had he gone back upon his old policy that, nine years after the exclusion of the clergy from the higher offices, less than three years after he had undone the work of the Good Parliament, and stripped Wykeham of his temporalities, we find him contriving the nomination of Archbishop Sudbury as Chancellor—apparently in order to make him and the Church in part responsible for the obnoxious poll-tax.

However little sympathy Wyclif might have had with the oppressed labourers and serfs—and we know that his sympathies for them were keen—he would certainly be revolted by this double retrogression. He could not but recognise that he was passing out of touch with the King's uncle; and it may well have happened that this knowledge strengthened and confirmed his independence.

So, when the Duke came down to Oxford (if indeed he came in person) and bade him suppress his conscience, and leave what he considered the idolatry of the mass unchallenged, he positively declined to fall in with the suggestion. Not only so, but he thought it necessary to make his position in the matter still more plain. This he did by means of a *Confession*, addressed apparently *ad suos Oxonienses*, and dated on the feast of Saints Gordian and Epimachus (May 10th), in the year 1381.

In the course of this dignified and moderate document, one of the last of his Latin treatises (for he still shrank from disturbing the belief of unlettered persons on so critical a point of faith), Wyclif fully admitted that there was a sense in which Christ's body was really present in the host. But he "could not venture to say that the consecrated bread was essentially, substantially, corporeally, and identically the body of Christ." There were, he said, three modes of presence in the host—virtual, spiritual, and sacramental. The second mode implies (*præexistit*) the first, and the third implies the other two. Christ's body was more really present in this than in the other sacraments; but it was still more really present in heaven. And this declaration he makes in agreement with the true meaning (*logicam*) of Scripture, of the holy doctors, and of the canon of the Roman Church. It was only such as could not believe on all this evidence who started the idea that an accident might be the body of Christ. We may well hold that "by virtue of the words of Christ, the bread becomes and is, in miraculous fashion, the body of Christ," in the sense that the parts of that body are spiritually and severally in the consecrated bread—and, if the parts of the body, yet more certainly those of the soul. Yet foolish persons continue to raise the old question (*idiotæ remurmurant*), asking how this could possibly be, unless Christ were present in very substance, and in the natural sense. To which Wyclif replies that he explains it precisely as the Roman doctors explained the incarnation.

Wyclif's conclusion is clearly stated. The consecrated host is naturally bread and wine; but sacramentally it is the body and blood of Christ. The sacrament which we worship is not the substance of bread and wine, but the body and blood of Christ. But the "worshippers of accidents" adore it not even as the simple accident, without the substance; they worship the actual sacramental sign—the bread and wine—as being the actual body and blood of Christ. We hold to Christ's very words: "This *is* my body." And so we worship the *body*, no longer the visible bread and wine.

Then he quotes in his support the old doctors of the first millennium, Ignatius, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Nicholas II., and the custom of the Church. With these Wyclif contrasts the moderns, who dishonour Christ's body. And he ends with stern words against those who receive the testimony of Innocent and Raymundi rather than the sense of Scripture, and the later rather than the earlier doctrine.

"Above all and once again, woe to the obstinate tongue of the apostate who buries the Roman Church beneath a pile of false utterances, whereby he pretends that the later Church, when opposed to the earlier, has rectified the faith, declaring that this sacrament is an accident without a subject, and not actual bread and wine, as both the Gospel and the canon of the Church affirm. For Augustine is our witness that no priest of Christ can make an accident without a subject. Yet these priests of Baal, falsely after the pattern of their father, so highly extol the

sacredness of this accident that they hold every other form of mass unworthy of being listened to, and pretend that all who dissent from their falsehoods are ignoramuses, I suppose, from some university in the realms of darkness. But I believe that the truth will finally bring them into subjection."

There seem to have been many rejoinders to this Confession. John Tyssyngton, a friar of the Order of Franciscans, wrote a terribly long-winded treatise in order to confute Wyclif's views on the sacrament, which Netter has preserved amongst the "wheat" of his promiscuous gleaning (in the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum cum Tritico*) ; and an Augustinian friar, Thomas Wynterton, wrote still more at length in his tract *Absolutio*. Berton and Sutbraye, too—the latter a monk of St. Alban's, and both of them members of the Synod which met at the Blackfriars priory in the following year—took up their pens against the irrepressible heretic ; and a certain "*Dunelmensis*" followed suit. It is clear that the persistent courage of Wyclif, which inspired him to stronger utterance after each successive attempt to crush him, gave abundant provocation and stimulus to the zealous orthodoxy of his contemporaries amongst the regular and secular clergy.

According to Henry of Knyghton, canon of Leicester, who wrote and died in the reign of Richard II., and was therefore a contemporary of Wyclif, as well as a near neighbour, the Rector of Lutterworth made his peace with the Church on this occasion, in order to avoid death, and "abandoned his defence not of divine wisdom but of his hollow

professions." Here is the Confession as given by Knyghton—and apparently by him alone.

"I knowleche that the Sacrement of the autar is verry Goddus body in fourme of brede: but it is in another maner Goddus body then it is in hevene. For in heven it is sene fote (seven feet high) in fourme and figure, of fleshe and blode. But in the Sacrement Goddus body is be (by) myracle of God in fourme of brede, and is he nouther of sene fote, ne in mannes figure. But as a man leeves for to thenk the kynde of an ymage, whether it be of oke or of asshe, and settys his thought in him of whom is the ymage, so myche more schuld a man leve to thenk on the kynde of brede, but thenk upon Christ, for his body is the same brede that is the Sacrement of the Autere, and with alle clennes, alle divocion, and alle charite that God wolde gif him, worshippe he Christ; and then he receyves God gostly, more medefullly than the Prist that syngus the Masse in lesse charite. For the bodely etyng ne profytes nouth to soule, but in als mykul as the soule is fedde with charite. This sentence is provyde be Crist that may nought lye. For as the Gospel says, 'Crist, that night that he was betraiede of Judas Scarioth, he tok brede in hise hondes, and besside it, brak it, and gaf it to hise discipulus to ete.' For he says, and may not lye, 'This is my body.'"

Clearly, however, this is no retraction at all, but only a statement of belief in general terms, such as might be used by men almost as opposite in their ultimate conclusions as Wyclif and Courtenay. It is not so much on the symbols of faith that devotees

have been wont to quarrel with and burn each other as on their interpretations of the symbols, or rather on the words in which they have attempted to express their interpretations. Mr. T. Arnold has hazarded a suggestion that Knyghton and his friends, in their zeal for orthodoxy, may have put this short English statement into circulation as though it were the substance of the Confession, or the actual Confession, made by Wyclif at Oxford. One would imagine that if his enemies could have brought themselves to such a point of dishonesty they would have taken care to make a better bargain with their consciences.

There are other possible explanations. If the "I knowleche" paper is a genuine production of Wyclif's, and if it was at any time written or accepted as a confession, in order to protect the writer from an unpleasant alternative, the immunity was certainly purchased cheap. But it might have been so. There would have been nothing dishonourable in Wyclif's saying, "If this paper will satisfy you, without elaboration and comment, I am willing to sign it, for it expresses my honest belief." And there would be nothing very extraordinary in Courtenay's accepting it on those terms, for it may have saved him at some particular moment an infinity of trouble, and still have given him the appearance of a triumph, which he could trust the friars to make the most of throughout the country.

This hypothesis, indeed, is scarcely more satisfactory than the other. The last thing which Wyclif would be likely to do of his own free will would be

to give his astute foes the opportunity of proclaiming that he had retracted his mature and deliberate opinions. It is possible enough that he may have written such a paper in order to hand it in at the beginning of Berton's inquiry in 1381, or of one of the inquiries held by Courtenay in the following year, as an abstract or text for elucidation. In that case it is easy to understand how the document might come to be called, as it is by Knyghton, a "*refugium mortis*."

That Wyclif, however, was not merely the obstinate old man who clings to his opinions with senile perversity, and because he has lost the spirit of conciliation, is proved by an admission which he makes in the *Trialogus*, written after his withdrawal to Lutterworth. "I have undertaken," he says, without indicating when or to whom the promise was made—it may have been either to John of Gaunt or to Courtenay—"not to use out of the schools the term 'substance of material bread and wine.'" It must have cost him dear to make even this conditional promise, which of course is a very different thing from a retraction.



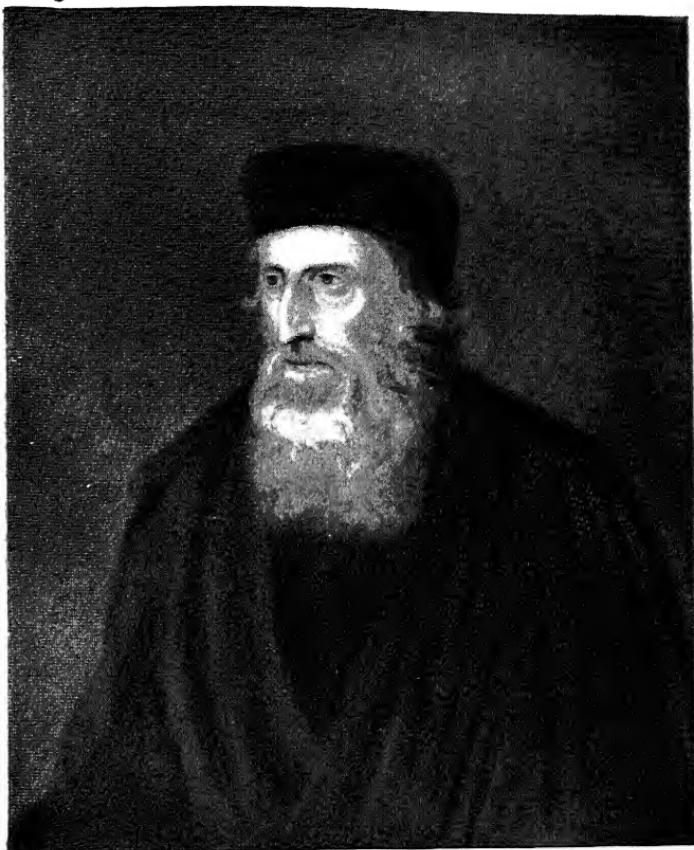


## CHAPTER XIV.

### WYCLIF'S POOR PRIESTS.

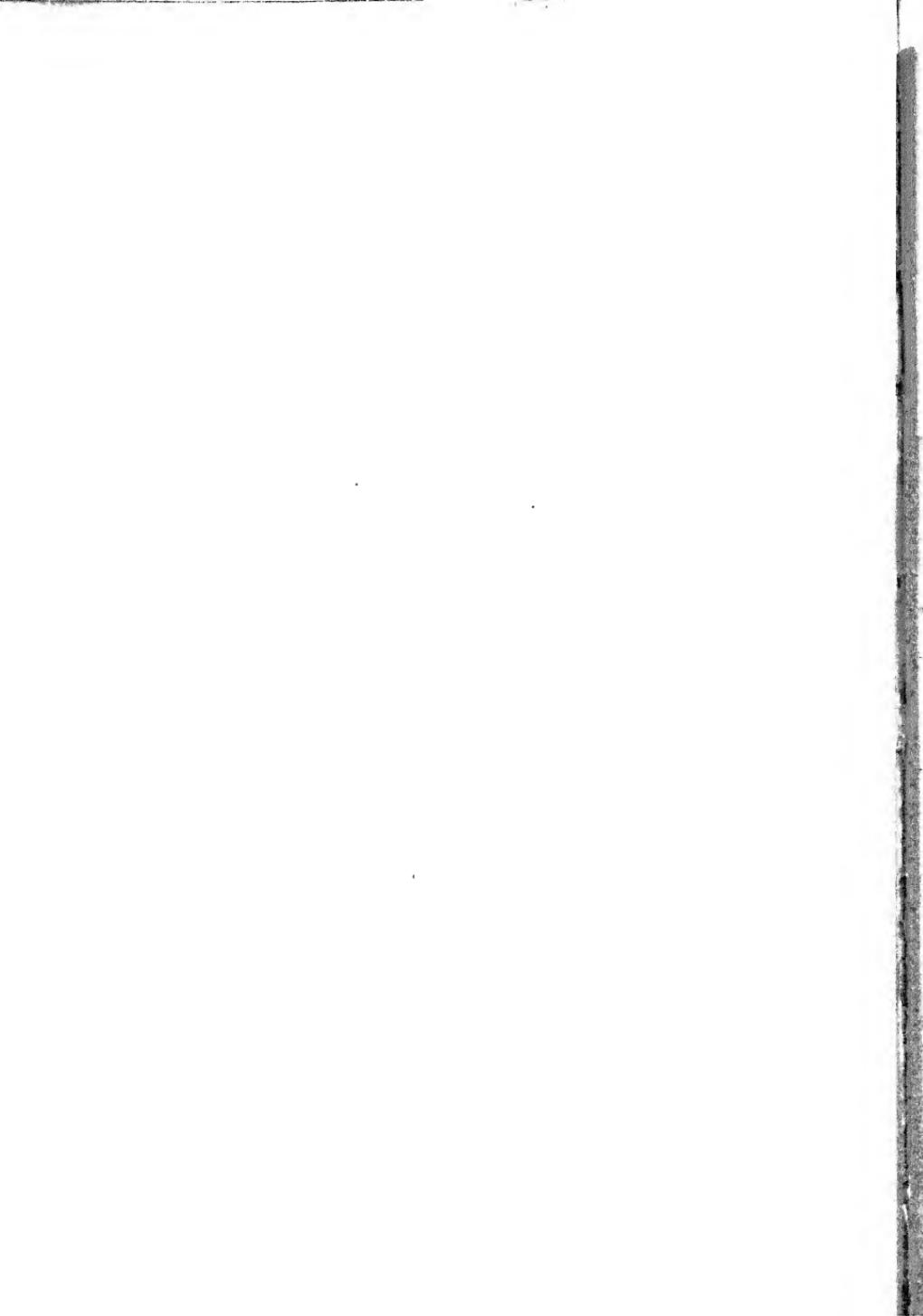


HOUGH much that is interesting and comparatively new remains to be said about the Peasants' Revolt in the fourteenth century, we have no more to do with it in the present volume than may be necessary to show how much or how little John Wyclif contributed to bring it about, and in what manner it affected his own life and the development of his ideas. In this sense it is at least as important as any other chapter of events in the history of the early reformation; for there can be no doubt that the panic produced amongst the governing classes by the uprising of the serfs was for the religious reformers a final check to the hope of speedy victory.



JOHN WYCLIF.

ENGRAVED BY E. FINDEN, FROM A PORTRAIT ATTRIBUTED TO ANTONIO MORO : NOW  
AN HEIRLOOM IN THE RECTORY OF WYCLIFFE-ON-Tees.



That Wyclif was in some degree, however indirectly, responsible for the popular discontent is probably quite as true as the charge of direct complicity and encouragement is ludicrously false. It was alleged against him by his enemies that he deliberately prepared the way for an outbreak, and that certain of his utterances on lordship, and on the rights of subjects as against their rulers, were distinctly subversive in their character. If these utterances had been written and spoken in English, instead of Latin, there would have been a great deal more force in the accusation. But, even as it was, the doctrine was there; it had been written and preached; every disciple of Wyclif, and every Poor Priest to whom he gave his commission, had learned it, was proud of it, and would naturally teach it on the village greens and on the roadside. The germs would spread and grow in fertile soil; the crop would inevitably spring up, grow rank, and whiten to the harvest. Is anything gained by denying that principles which would justify revolution in one order of government must be held to justify it in another, and that Wyclif himself did not simply argue from divine to civil government, but drew his inferences from the general to the particular, and claimed that the Church might correct the Pope because the nation might justly correct its own leaders?

It was afterwards stated that John Ball, on the eve of his execution, declared that he and his friends had been misled by the teaching of Wyclif and his followers. Even if it were so—and we may see

reason by and by to regard this statement with particular caution so far as Ball is concerned—it may be fully admitted that the teaching of the Wycliffites must have helped to breathe spirit and resolution into the rural classes. It is well that this accusation should be taken out of the mouths of Wyclif's enemies, who not only gave him the treatment of a malefactor in his lifetime but burned his bones and corroded his memory when he was dead; but it is better still that the admission should come frankly from the mouths of his friends, who can have no object in denying that he was both a reproach and a danger to the authorities of his day.

Wyclif taught, as we have seen, that the ultimate power and authority resided in the people at large. "The right to govern depends upon good government; there is no moral constraint to pay tax or tithe to bad rulers, either in the Church or in the State; it is permitted to put an end to tyranny, to punish or depose unjust rulers, and to resume the wealth which the clergy have diverted from the poor." No further argument would be needed to justify starving peasants in refusing to pay an oppressive poll-tax, when their only means of paying it was to take the food out of the mouths of their wives and children. Wyclif may not have expected that the seed which he sowed would bear fruit in this particular fashion, and with such raw haste. On the other hand, he was not a man of delays and misgivings, wherever he was clear and convinced in matters of principle. It is true that he recognised the necessity of caution, and more than once exposed the

folly of precipitate action—as on the noteworthy occasion when he declined to advise the abolition of Peter's pence. But there are times when the day of caution seems to have passed, and nothing but immediate action is likely to serve the turn. It is hardly possible to doubt that in ecclesiastical affairs, at any rate, Wyclif believed that such a time had arrived. He might have been a Crammer, a Knox, not to say a Cromwell, if the opportunity had arisen for him to strip the corrupted Church of her meretricious robes and jewels. He would have done it. He would have helped John of Gaunt to do it, with the supreme confidence of an honest man that only in this way could the Church once more deserve her majestic title as the bride of Christ.

Where the State was concerned apart from the Church, Wyclif evidently recognised that he had not the same warrant to lay down a law of conduct for his fellow-creatures. In any case he did not press his arguments with the same force and directness. They went just as much to the root of the matter for one form of government as for another; but Wyclif displayed a reserve and a reticence when speaking of the existing civil organisation which were not apparent when he spoke of the Christian community.

In a volume like the present it would be out of place to examine in detail the scheme of the two Latin works which Wyclif wrote in middle life on *The Lordship of God* and on *Civil Lordship*. The reader who will be satisfied with an abstract of these treatises—which are based in large measure, as has

already been indicated, on the works of Marsiglio, Ockham, and Fitzralph—may be referred to the account which has been given of them by Mr. R. L. Poole (*Wycliffe and Movements for Reform*).

It is in the *Civil Lordship* that we should look for Wyclif's more deliberate views on the relations of government and the governed; and it is there, in fact, that we find the most direct statement of what has been called his "subversive doctrine." He considers two distinct phases of lordship, the natural and the civil, the latter being essentially based upon the former. Like other writers of his age on kindred subjects, he takes his illustrations and his parallels from the feudal system, and especially from the mutual relation of lordship and service, upon which the whole edifice of that system rests. In natural or religious lordship he finds the grand peculiarity that the lord paramount is the only absolute lord, of whom each individual holds directly, and to whom alone every individual owes his service. But civil lordship, as Mr. Poole interprets his argument, is "transitory and liable to modification according to the changes of human society. It becomes therefore to Wycliffe a matter of slight importance what particular form of government be adopted in any given country, since its only claim to excellence depends upon its relation with 'natural lordship,' in other words with the precepts of religion."

Yet the Reformer's ideal is certainly not what we should understand under the name of theocracy. Logically followed out, his argument would land us in a sort of communism, practical enough, perhaps,

if all mankind had first attained to counsels of perfection.

Kings, then, are responsible to the lord paramount from whom they derive their lordship ; but they are lords only in as much as they are stewards for God, and by virtue of their service. And their service is due not only to God but to their fellow-men. As all things are God's, they cannot belong to the steward more than to anyone else, and, so far as there is any property in them, they must belong in common to all. Wyclif, says Mr. Poole, "had not yet learned the effect of his doctrine in practical life, as displayed in the rebellion of 1381 ; but he seems conscious of the danger of excusing by implication desultory attempts of this nature, when he warns his hearers against resort to force except it be likely to put an end to tyranny."

The reasoning of these Latin treatises, however, was too subtle and too academic to reach the minds of the serfs, except as interpreted to them in their own language ; and the interpretation probably went in some cases beyond the intention of the original text. The arguments just cited are clearly not the conclusions of a visionary, but rather the opportunism of a reasonable man, who desired the gradual development of the State, and not a social cataclysm. Wyclif did not fear a revolution in the Church itself. He doubtless thought that it would be highly beneficial ; but there is nothing to show that he desired or even anticipated a national revolution in the political order of things. If notwithstanding this, the tendency of his teaching was

towards such a revolution, who will say that he was personally and morally responsible for the evils which attended the Peasants' Revolt?

The question is of so much importance, both in the history of the period and in the biography of Wyclif, that it would be misleading to go on to the details of this Revolt without making some further effort to appreciate the relations of the Reformer himself, and of his disciples and interpreters, towards the men who actually rebelled and revolted against the intolerable conditions of their existence.

Of the exact manner and degree in which Wyclif impressed his own personality, socially and religiously, on the poorest of his fellow-countrymen throughout his laborious life, whether as parish priest in his three successive livings or as a man of wide sympathies and self-sacrificing benevolence, we have unfortunately very little direct evidence. It is true that we cannot require much evidence of this kind for the mere purpose of proof, when those who think least favourably of his actions are most disposed to magnify their influence with the common people. All that we know of this single-minded devotee of truth and "Goddis law" (the term became a symbol and watchword of the Wycliffites\*) points one way as to his absolute superiority to personal aims and self-seeking. It was one of the central points of his teaching that not a penny should be taken from the trust-funds of the Church, which are the patrimony of the poor, either for "covetise of

\* Henry of Knyghton says: "They used such an expression in all their speech, always asserting the law of God, 'Goddislawe.'"

priests" or to support the pomp of Rome. He steadfastly refused to be a pluralist; and even if he supplied his necessities from the proceeds of his benefices at Fillingham, Ludgarshall, and Lutterworth—which is doubtful—we may be sure that he spent all the remainder upon his parishioners. He could not have preached the doctrine of poverty as he did whilst lavishing on himself what he did not need for his sustenance. If he had been inconsistent on that one point, above all others, his enemies would have made England ring with it, and the books of the friars, which denounce him so fiercely on the score of his heresy, would have abounded in gibes and sneers at his hypocrisy.

The fact that Wyclif was King's chaplain, and occupied a position as lecturer or professor of divinity at Oxford, at the same time that he held a living in the Church, is nothing to the contrary of what has been stated above. The ordinary pluralist took his two or more benefices, his two or more prebends simultaneously, as favours or rewards, though he was rarely capable of performing all the corresponding duties, and was generally content to hold sinecure offices. Wyclif's chaplaincy and lectureship, however they may have been paid, could not be enjoyed without the full performance of stipulated work. Clearly the absence of a country rector for part of the year in London, and another part of the year at Oxford, especially in those days of slow travelling, must have interfered to some extent with his parish duties; but we know that Wyclif maintained assistants on whom he could rely, men whom

he trained to preach and to translate the Bible, as well as to explain and illustrate it by precept and example.

Chaucer's picture of the secular priest may well have been thought of and mentioned in connection with Wyclif; and as we are trying to realise what he must have been to his poorest neighbours, and what his Poor Priests must have been to the serfs through his influence, it cannot be idle to recall the picture here. Might it not be reasonable to suppose that the old Rector of Lutterworth, but recently dead when the *Canterbury Tales* were completed, had unwittingly sat for the portrait of the "good man of religion"? We may recognise here the moral lineaments of Wyclif's character—apart from his controversies and logomachies—at least as confidently as we can see the actual features of his face in the Denbigh portrait.

"A good man was ther of religioun,  
And was a pore Persoun of a toun ;  
But riche he was of holy thought and werk,  
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
That Christes gospel truly wolde preche ;  
His parischens devoutly wolde he teche . . .  
But rather wolde he geven out of dowte  
Unto his pore parischens aboute,  
Of his offryngne, and eek of his substance.  
He cowde in litel thing han suffisance . . .  
This noble ensample unto his scheep he gaf,  
That ferst he wrought, and after that he taught.  
Out of the gospel he the wordes caught,  
And this figure he added yet therto—  
That if gold rust, what shulde yron do ?  
For if a Prest be foul, on whom we trust,  
No wonder is a lewèd man to rust . . .

To drawe folk to heven by fairesse,  
By good ensample, was his busynesse.  
But it were eny person obstinat,  
What so he were of high or low estat,  
Him wolde he snybbe sharply for the nones . . .  
. . . Christes lore, and his apostles' twelve,  
He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselfe."

As to Wyclif's political sympathies with his poorest fellow-countrymen there is no question. He protests strongly in his later writings against abuses and oppressions to which Englishmen were exposed, such as the inequality of the law, the venality of the lawyers, the falsification of legal documents, the subornation of perjury, the perversion of justice, the manifold extortions and fraudulent enforcement of serfdom and labour. It has been urged that he was secured as a popular champion in 1381, and that his greater popularity from this time forward was due to a political (as well as a religious) new departure in the year just named. At any rate the actual revolt of the peasants may well have stimulated his political sympathies.

It is no more possible to fix a precise date for the first commissioning of Wyclif's Priests than it is to say when the earliest of his extant English sermons was preached, or when he began to translate the New Testament. It has already been said that the plan of some of his Sunday Gospel sermons is such as to suggest that they were mere skeletons prepared for the use of the disciples whom he sent forth to the byways of England, to win the souls of the poorest hinds, and to tear away the veil of ignorance or prejudice which had hitherto hidden the Scrip-

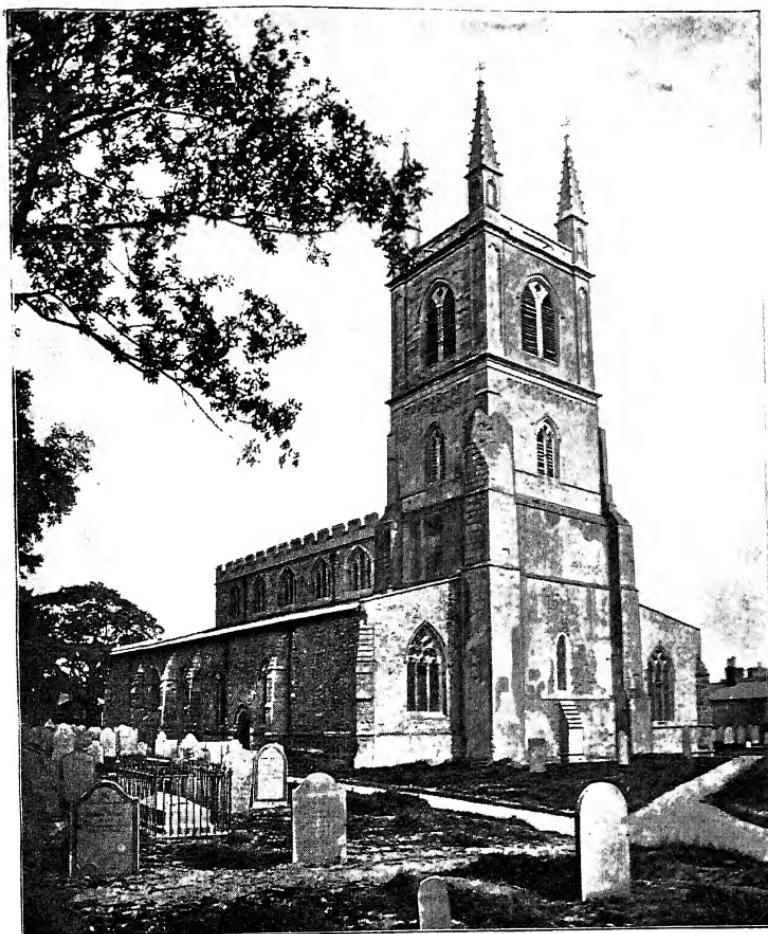
n them. His complete version, as we know, the last few years of his life, but we cannot the first manuscript of his first translation be copied out and distributed. It seems to onable belief that the earlier copies were his first missionary priests, and that these ies — volunteers, it may be, who asked better than to put his precepts into prac- out from Oxford, or Lutterworth, before like a systematic mission could be said to

is no ground to suppose that Wyclif in- desired to create an Order, in any sense of

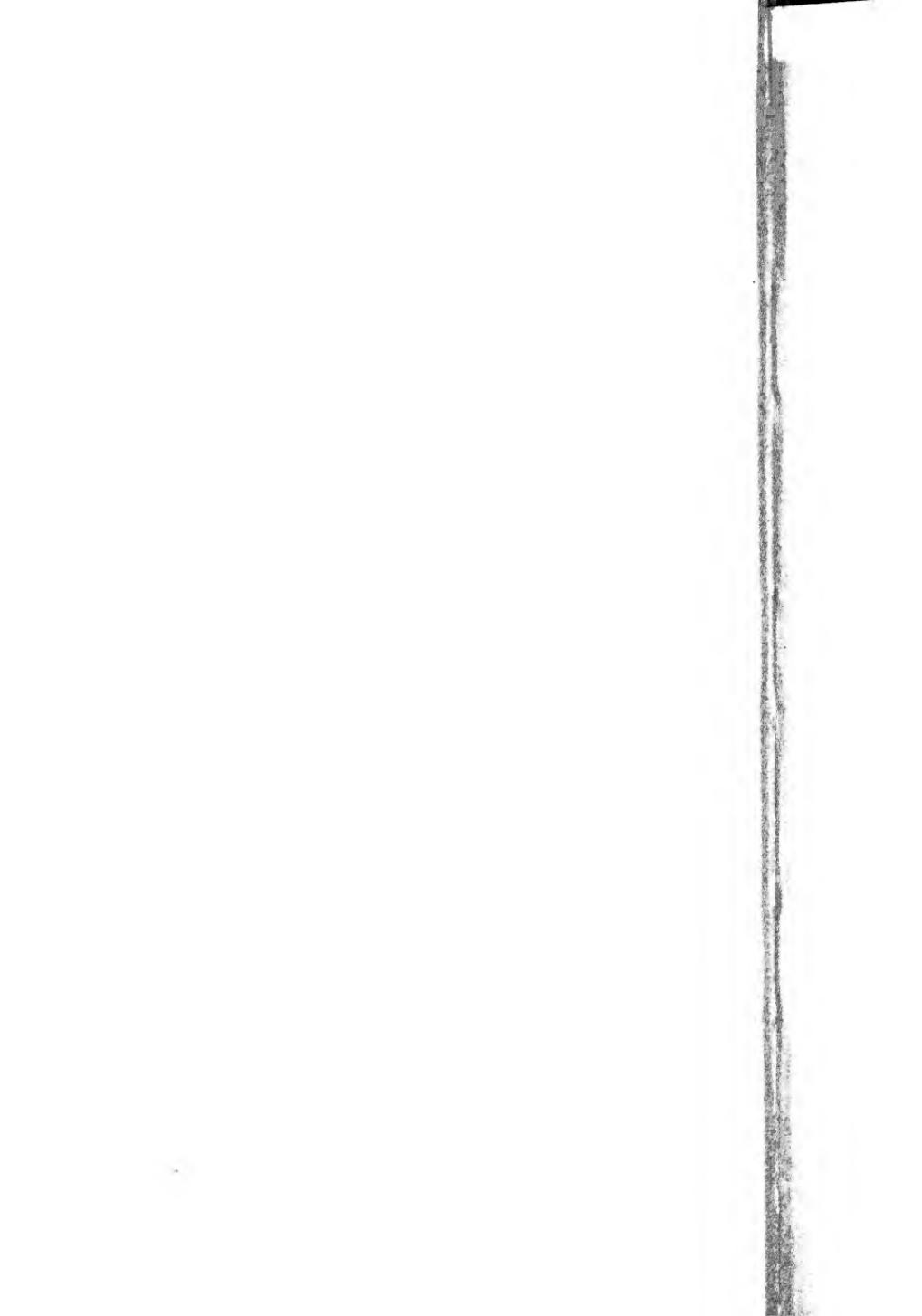
He had seen too much of the perversion intentions of that sort to allow him to enter- a design. But unless the mission of the ad been in some measure systematic, it is hat his contemporaries, friends and enemies ould have mentioned it as one of the salient is career.

usy to believe that Oxford supplied Wyclif an enthusiast willing to don the sheep- sandals, and to abandon all—ease and cul- genial companionship—for his regimen of poverty. It is indeed impossible not to hat such a cause, at such a moment, at- cores of men in that home and nursery of nthusiasms, which for seven hundred years r failed to furnish either pioneers for a haz- enterprise or leaders for a forlorn hope. But edly a certain number of the Poor Priests mble and unlettered men, who had been





LUTTERWORTH CHURCH.  
PARTLY CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH WYCLIF.



touched by the fire of their master's zeal in his rural home at Lutterworth. Their plain speech and lack of refinements would be amongst their most hopeful qualifications for the task entrusted to them. They went forth to speak and associate with their kind, clad in a distinctive robe of undressed wool, brown and rough as the russet apples in their homely garden plots, relying for food and shelter on the goodwill of their hearers, forbidden to thrive by their calling like the mendicants of an Order that was no longer poor, and rich only in their knowledge of the word of God, or haply in the possession of a roll of Scripture in their mother-tongue, and a few of their master's sermons.

The monks and friars and secular clergymen who came at times to listen to these uncouth wayfarers, and to deride their appearance and their ignorance before the simple folk whom they had gathered together, applied to them a term of contempt which had long been in use on the continent for religious fanatics of the humbler sort. The English "loller" of Langland's day was, indeed, a mere loafer and idler, not necessarily religious, or a babbler of any kind. Thus, in the *Vision of Piers Plowman*—

" All that have their health  
And their eyen-sight,  
And limbs to labour with,  
And use the loller's life,  
Live against God's law,  
And love of holy church."

"Lollard" and "loller" in fact, did not mean quite the same thing, though the words descended from

a common ancestor. The English loller was a sturdy beggar who lived on his fellow-men, and in this sense the term would have suited many of the mendicant friars—"great lubbers and long, that loth were to swynke," as Langland calls them. But the foreign congener of the loller was a religious enthusiast who seems to have obtained his nickname from the friars themselves—a fourteenth-century ante-type of the modern revivalist, or Salvation Army preacher, who would have nothing to say to the regular Orders. An authority quoted by Ducange, referring to the year 1309, speaks of "*quidam hypocritæ gyrovagi, qui Lollardi sive Deum-laudantes vocabantur.*" The Praise-Gods of Wyclif's time accepted and kept the name for themselves, and have been known to history as Lollards ever since.

Sundry references are found in Wyclif's later works—as in the *Trialogus* and the *De Ecclesia*—to the institution of the Poor Priests.

"It seems to be a meritorious thing," he says in one place, "to associate good priests together, since Christ, the pattern of every good work, did likewise. But when they ask for alms let these priests be particularly cautious in these three respects. First, let them move from place to place, and not become established (*hæredati*), for they are not confirmed without regard to their good behaviour. But if they live worthily and uprightly, let them enjoy temporal gifts in moderation. Secondly, let their number, their locality, and the time of their appointment be well considered, for both excess and deficiency in these points introduce an occasion of error, according



THE PRIESTS' DOORWAY, LUTTERWORTH CHURCH, THROUGH WHICH  
WYCLIF'S BODY WAS TAKEN.



to the opinion of discreet men. Thirdly, let them be given to the duties which befit the priesthood, for want of habitude as well as indolence unfits men for this work; and it is not every occupation, as the keeping of a booth, or hunting, or devotion to games or to chess, which is becoming to a priest, but studious acquaintance with God's law, plain preaching of the word of God, and devout prayerfulness." Especially they should be good preachers, for in this way Christ conquered his kingdom; "but let him who does not preach publicly exhort in private. . . . And if anyone is specially skilled in training priests on this model, he has a power which comes of God, and possesses merit through grace when he accomplishes such a work."

However obnoxious the Poor Priests, and the independent Lollards, of whom John Ball was a type, may have been to the secular and religious clergy, they were far from being universally unpopular amongst the higher classes. Walsingham says, and there is no reason to doubt him, that "lords and the highest men in the land, as well as many of the people, supported them in their preaching, and favoured those who taught erroneous conclusions—and very naturally, since they assigned such great authority to laymen, even the authority to deprive ecclesiastics and religious corporations of their temporalities."

Courtenay refers to them in a letter to the Carmelite friar Peter Stokys of Oxford, in 1382, as "wolves in sheep's clothing," sons of perdition, preaching their false conclusions under a cloak of great sanctity.

No name was too bad for them in the mouths of regulars and seculars alike, especially after the Revolt. So long as the bishops and monks had no charge to bring against them except one of unsound doctrine, the men of that comparatively liberal age paid little attention to the ecclesiastical censure; but so soon as suspicion and prejudice attached to them in connection with the outbreak of the peasants, the Archbishop was able to deal them some shrewd and effective blows. Nevertheless we shall see that the later English Lollards—that is, Wyclif's Poor Priests and their converts—were stronger than their persecutors, more enduring than the Wycliffite school at Oxford, and sufficiently pertinacious to bridge the darkness of the fifteenth century with an unbroken line of light.

We have been at such pains to establish the connection between the early Reformation and the Peasants' Revolt that we may have lost sight for a moment of the main and prevailing causes of this half-abortive revolution. But if anyone could be found in those days capable of maintaining that Wyclif and his disciples were primarily responsible for the Revolt, it would be enough to ask in reply what would have been likely, and indeed certain, to happen at the close of the fourteenth century even if the last of the Schoolmen, the first of the English Reformers, had never written, preached, or lived. Assuredly we might account for and justify the rising—as every historian worthy of attention has held it to have been justified—without bringing Wyclif into the reckoning at all. Let us consider for a brief space what were the principal

causes of the outbreak which alarmed all England at this important and most interesting crisis—an outbreak which, if organisation had been possible, and if competent leaders had been forthcoming, might have still more deeply modified the whole future history of the country, even if it had not then and there set up a durable commonwealth on a broad basis of enfranchisement.

First and foremost amongst these causes must be reckoned the obsolescence and gradual decay of the feudal system, owing not so much to the Anglo-French dynastic wars—which were but one chapter of a long story—as to certain natural and logical developments of feudalism, sure to take place sooner or later, and already in operation when the fourteenth century began. Feudalism could not endure more than a century or two, at any rate in its original form, in any country not perfectly secure against the risk of foreign wars. It arose out of anarchy and general insecurity, and was the best attainable device for supplying the two great needs of humanity under such conditions, protection for the weak and military aid for the ruler. But its deterioration as a system began at the very moment of its establishment, and sprang from the same causes which had called it into existence. Moreover this deterioration proceeded most rapidly in a country where feudalism had been imposed on a subject race by their conquerors. The combination of the weak gradually made them strong, and the dependence of the rulers on the lower grades, both for men-at-arms and for supplies of money, gradually made them weak.

When this inevitable process had set in, the decay of feudalism was a mere question of time. The lord paramount had to sell his authority fragment by fragment for the service which he required ; the mesne lords passed from the attitude of guaranteeing protection to that of relying on those who fought, worked, and paid for them. The ultimate essentials of human society—the valour, the sinews, the taxes of the multitude—assured for them the final mastery. That seems to be the central law of historical development, under every species of government from the highest to the lowest; and to struggle against it—save for purposes of delay—is as futile as it is puerile. Before the end of the thirteenth century, Englishmen had seen this process in active operation. De Montfort and his friends may not have been philosophers, and may not have felt the full significance of their acts ; but at the moment when they created a new instrument of government out of the English Commons they were giving effect to the fundamental law, under which the power of feudalism was now rapidly dwindling away.

It has been pointed out that the growth of the farming and merchant classes, the expansion of the towns, the increasing powers of chartered governments and guilds—successively effects and causes of feudal decay—brought into existence a middle class of new-rich men, whether rising from below or descending from the classes of barons and knights. City men like the Fitzwarrens, Fitzwalters, Whittingtons, Philipots, and Walworths, and their parallels in the sea-ports and manufacturing towns, gradu-

ally amassed wealth, and, when opportunity offered, bought up the interests of such of the older barons and knights as were compelled to part with their estates and manors. They bought, of course, the villeins and serfs together with the land, or at any rate they bought the power to exact service from these weakest units of the population. The amount and kind of service due from each, or the rent paid in lieu of service, was set forth in the transferred title-deeds, which were proof and evidence of hereditary servitude. The villeins, free labourers, and smaller farmers who had gradually risen above the class of serfs, whether by redemption or by free grant of immunity, often continued for a long time to render some acknowledgment to the lord of the manor, in the shape of work or its equivalent ; and a sentiment of personal loyalty would maintain the custom of this acknowledgment even in cases where it had ceased to be legally due. But when the baron or manorial lord had brought himself into difficulties, by luxury, travel, war, or chivalry, and his estate had been sold to a new-comer, sentiment had no more to say in the matter, and the subordinate folk stood towards the stranger on their legal or moral rights. The feudal link was in these instances finally severed, and only the serfs and the more subservient labourers remained thus closely addicted to the soil.

Towards the middle of Edward's reign the serf, the villein, the large manor-farmer himself, eager to establish complete independence, or occasionally fired by mere ambition or greed, was ready for the first opportunity of cancelling every record of ser-

vice; and the chance of doing this simply, safely, and effectively was one of the more immediate inducements of the great mobilisation of 1381.

Beyond the causes already mentioned which had tended to weaken the barons and knights, and to strengthen the labouring classes, there was one which did not come into operation much before the middle of the fourteenth century, when its effect was sudden, remarkable, and decisive. This was the notable decrease of the population, brought about by two entirely distinct occurrences—war and plague. In estimating the effect of these occurrences, statistics are not wholly to be relied on. There were no means in those days of taking them exactly, or there is no evidence that the available means were scrupulously employed. The whole tendency of the time would be towards wild exaggeration. The word “million” in the mouth of a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century chronicler must be taken as an easy approximation, not as a verified figure. It has been said that more than half the population of England perished by the plague in 1348–1350—a statement which is certainly not proved by the partial computations made for London, Bristol, and Norwich. The question, however, need not be argued here. It is enough for the purpose to allow that the repeated visitations of the Black Death, the worst of which occurred in the years just mentioned, in 1361–1362, 1368, and 1374, supplemented by the French and Scottish wars, made great havoc throughout the country, and in the more unfortunate districts very seriously diminished the population.

It has been urged, and it is doubtless partially true, that this depletion of men improved the condition of the free labourers who were left, and who were now able to command a higher price for their labour. Of course it must have been so in many instances. The figures adduced by Mr. Thorold Rogers in his *History of Prices*—irrefragable as statistics, but perhaps safer within particular areas than for general application—sufficiently attest the fact. It is hardly necessary to say that nothing like a universal or even a general amelioration of the condition of the poorest classes can have taken place in England in consequence of the shrinking population. Still less could any such amelioration have lasted up to 1380. The evils of plague and war far outweighed their advantages to the survivors. If wages increased, so also did the price of various commodities and necessities of existence; and the attempt of the free labourers to sell their work for anything more than the indispensable requirements of life was promptly met by royal ordinances (on the advice of Parliament) in 1349, 1350, and succeeding years, strictly limiting the remuneration of labour.

Moreover the scarcity of labour was counteracted by the dereliction of farms—and we need not travel from our own generation to appreciate the fact that a large efflux of labourers from the country is not enough of itself to raise the wages of those who remain. The various causes which were at work acted and reacted on each other. Landlords and even clergymen quitted their posts and crowded into the capital. Serfs risked the penalties of outlawry and

roamed about in quest of high pay or more abundant food, thus rapidly bringing down the rate of wages even below the price which had been fixed by law. And then the stewards of the manors, in order to check the migration of free labourers as well as of the serfs, committed in many cases the crowning injustice of falsifying their service-rolls, destroying some records and perhaps inventing others, so that the sons of men who had bought their freedom with a price found themselves claimed and held to labour after a life of comparative liberty. It is more than probable that the rural classes were in a worse condition in 1380 than they had been in 1340.

It is only when we keep in mind these various predisposing causes, and consider how long and systematically the English peasant had been prepared for his revolt, that we can appreciate the effect of the taxation laid upon him in the reign of Richard II. In an evil hour, in the first year of Richard's reign, the King's Council determined to raise money by means of a capitation tax—*taxa hactenus inaudita*, as Walsingham describes it—which was graduated according to the position and age of the contributor, down to a minimum of a groat for every child above the age of sixteen. This first poll-tax was proposed in 1377 or 1378, and levied in 1379.\* It was intensely unpopular, and the amount

\* The record of dates is a little confusing; but it is useful to remember that a poll-tax in the fourteenth century took longer to collect than an income-tax in the nineteenth, so that the whole field of production might not be covered by the King's officers for a year or

which it produced was not sufficient to cover the estimate of the King's advisers. In 1380 they repeated the levy, making it still more stringent by lowering the minimum age to fifteen. It was in the midst of this fatal political blundering that John of Gaunt, who seems to have been largely responsible for it, thought it wise, as no doubt it was from his own point of view, to associate the head of the English Church with his financial policy. On the 4th of July, 1379, Archbishop Sudbury was nominated to the Chancellorship; and in accepting this post the unlucky prelate, who had so faithfully adhered to the fortunes of the Duke of Lancaster, signed his own death-warrant. He held office in the Parliament which granted the second poll-tax, and at a subsequent meeting of the King's Council he had the courage to oppose the suggested withdrawal of the tax in face of the resistance of the people. It is clear that he shared with the Duke, and with Sir Robert Hales, the Treasurer, a burden of fierce hatred from the exasperated tax-payers.

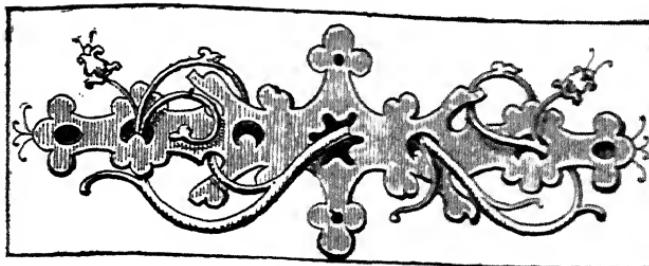
Hitherto the taxes had been levied on land, on knight's fees, movables, wool and leather, which affected the serfs not at all, and the free labourers very little. Tallage, indeed, had fallen on the demesne lands as well as on the towns, and this was virtually a poll-tax; but it had scarcely touched the labouring classes. Nevertheless its unpopularity was so great that it had been finally abolished in the

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more after a particular tax had been authorised. We are expressly told that the tax imposed by Parliament in 1380 was still being collected in June, 1381.

reign of Edward. A poll-tax of universal incidence had been proposed before 1377, but never actually levied. The impost in the year 1379 was the first which had fallen directly upon the poorest classes in the realm ; and it sufficed to light up the smouldering fire which was only waiting for a wind to puff it into flame.





## CHAPTER XV.

### THE HEADLESS REBELLION.



HE true fascination of history, whether it be the history of a race or of an individual, of a national government or of a moral revolution, is never realised until we have made a prolonged and laborious effort to reconstruct what time has buried in the dust. When at last, with patient toil and keen imagination, the student has succeeded in reaching a point from which it is possible to see, not the sheer realities, but the types and tendencies and probabilities of a half-forgotten age, he begins for the first time to understand the satisfaction of the traveller who has struck into an unknown land, or of the explorer who has laid bare the tombs and temples of an ancient civilisation.

If we could penetrate more deeply into the historical sources of human action, and trace each visible effect back through its proper channel to the centre of its causation, how dazzling would be the light which would thus be shed on the course of every national and personal development. How interesting, for example, it would be if we could recognise the exact measure of the survival of race antagonism between the English serf and the feudal and manorial lords, who had inherited three centuries of mutual enmity. How more than interesting to mark the descent from the political philosophy of Greece—or it may be only the separate and transitory re-creation—of that idea of universal equality which was the very motive and mainspring of the Peasants' Revolt! But to pursue such inquiries as these would be a task out of proportion with the scope of the present work, much as it might help us to comprehend the last few years of Wyclif's life.

It would be difficult to say for how long a period in the reign of Edward III. the serfs had been in a state of masked revolt. Oppression and over-taxation, callous injustice and blind revenge, grinding servitude and malignant hate, disorders of a hundred kinds, robbery and violence on the highways by men whose demoralisation arose out of resistance to intolerable wrongs, seditious talk and seditious plots, clamourings for leaders and abortive attempts to lead, attacks on the houses of the barons and on the King's officers, no security for innocence and no encouragement for loyalty, all the essentials of revolt short of the massing of the people for concerted

action—these signs and warnings of revolution had preceded the death of Edward. But it was the poll-tax which finally exasperated the common people, and stung them into open rebellion. No doubt, as Hollinshed tells us, it was paid “with great grudging and many a bitter curse.”

Early in 1381 the massing began ; but even now it would be idle to speak of concerted action. The distinguishing marks of this great uprising of the serfs were its spontaneity throughout the south-eastern countries, its lack of organisation, and, so far as one can see, the complete absence of recognised leaders to whom men could look for guidance and direction. The seething irresolute mob, so recently inarticulate, if not absolutely unvocal, had raised its huge limbs without a brain to control them, and had found a voice which proclaimed that forced labour and servitude of any kind should come to an end in England. What might not a capable leader have done in that critical year, with such a host behind him, ready to carry out his behests ? But indeed the thing was impossible. There was no discipline—there had been no chance of organisation. Possibly a strenuous man—some English Spartacus with a genius for command—might have pitched his camp on a Kentish plain, in the neighbourhood of Maidstone or Canterbury, or even on Blackheath, and there in the course of a few weeks he might have made an army out of a mob. But the mere suggestion of the idea is enough to show its futility : the lapse of time would have enabled the authorities in London to make far more effectual preparations.

The serf, in fact, was better off without a leader, without genius, without arms or provision of any kind. His cause was enough for his need ; the mute and stolid protest of these swarming thousands of self-emancipated slaves was all that was necessary—and it *was* necessary—to break their chains. The slaughter of the lawyers and manor stewards, the burning of the court-rolls and service-lists, the beheading of the Archbishop and Treasurer, the destruction of buildings in London—these incidents of the brief servile war were not sufficient in themselves to stamp it with the bloody mark of many a better organised revolution. The true character of the movement is seen in the perfect, almost childish, loyalty of the serfs to their King, in the admirable behaviour of the crowds which quietly dispersed when he had personally promised them redress, and in the equally admirable behaviour of the young monarch so long as he was under the influence of his mother. The plain significance of these facts was that the demands of the serfs were natural and right; and Richard and his best advisers saw them to be right.

If only all could have ended there—if Walworth had never cut down the defenceless spokesman of the rebels during his colloquy with the King,—if the hangings and quarterings which followed had been confined to men who were proved guilty of murder, and if Parliament had held itself pledged to grant the redress which Richard had promised, things might have gone better with England for the next hundred years. As Fuller says in his familiar

way, "Jack Straw would have been John of Gold had this treason taken effect." John Ball, Jack Straw, Wat Tyler, William Grindecobbe, would have been heroes every one, and the consolidation of English society would undoubtedly have been hastened by many years. The treason of the serfs was practically summed up in their demand for the abolition of serfdom. The boon was guaranteed at Mile End, Smithfield, and the Tower, only to be cancelled (so far as that was possible) when authority got the upper hand again.

Historians have almost ceased to talk about "the rebellion of Wat Tyler." The term is quite inadequate as a descriptive title, and it was only the accidental meeting of this man with the King and his retinue in Smithfield which gave his name such undue prominence. There were, in fact, two or more Tylers amongst the leaders of the peasants, and the Tyler of Dartford who avenged his daughter on the collector of poll-tax was not the same man as Wat Tyler, or Walter Helyer (either name would be an easy corruption from the other) whom Walworth slew. The last mentioned seems to have been an Essex man, who came to Blackheath by way of Kent, who acknowledged Ball for his leader, and whose best known companions were John Straw, John Kyrkeby, Alan Thredre, Thomas Scot, and Ralph Rugge.

It would be nearer to the truth if we were to speak of "the rebellion of John Ball." Harpsfield saw fit to call Wyclif the whetstone of revolt (*cos hujus seditionis*). That is a title to which Wyclif can lay but

little claim, whilst it is very appropriate to Ball. This Yorkshire priest, who came to live at Colchester soon after the year 1360, had been excommunicated by Archbishop Islip, and was apparently four times condemned and imprisoned by Islip and his successors. Langham wrote to the Dean of Bocking to denounce "one John Ball, pretending that he is a priest," who persisted in "preaching manifold errors and scandals." He called upon the Dean to admonish the said Ball, with "other and singular rectors, vicars, and parochial chaplains who adhered to him." Ten years after he was once more proceeded against, this time by Sudbury, and imprisoned in Maidstone jail. He was there again in the spring of 1381, when the men of Essex began the universal strike.

On the occasion of his last committal he is said to have told the Archbishop, on receiving sentence of imprisonment, that he would be set free again by twenty thousand of his friends; and it would seem to have been anything but a coincidence that the men of Kent, when they presently rose at the instigation of their brethren in Essex, marched straight to Maidstone, broke into the Archbishop's prison, and carried John Ball in triumph to Canterbury. Sudbury in the meantime had gone to London, where Ball may have seen him beheaded a few weeks later. There is no necessity to infer that Sudbury's death was in any way due to the personal vengeance of the man whom he had subjected to ecclesiastical discipline; but all the circumstances constrain one to believe that the Colchester priest had been planning

the revolt against serfdom for some time past, that he had determined to take advantage of the exasperation produced by the poll-tax, that he had been arrested and condemned in the midst of his preparations, and that he believed the strike would be begun by his friends in Essex at the time agreed upon, notwithstanding his incarceration. This would account for the course of events during the earlier days of the rising, and for the special prominence of Ball at Blackheath, whither he had marched with the men of Kent, instead of trying to cross the Thames in order to be with his more intimate associates—who would probably have started for London before he arrived at Rochester.

The *English History* of Walsingham fully vouches for the fact that the first massing, and the signal to move upon London, were due to personal initiation within the county of Essex. The chronicler says that “the authors and prime movers of this calamity” were Essex men; and they may doubtless be identified with John Ball and his friends. It is recorded that they sent round to every little homestead, and commanded all the men, veterans and raw lads included, to leave their occupations and their women-folk, to arm themselves in any way they could, and to assemble without fail at the appointed places, on pain of death. Accordingly some five thousand were gathered together, about the time of the spring ploughing and sowing, “of the lowest common people and the rustics,” armed with sticks, rusty swords, and scythes; a few of them (probably old soldiers who had fought in France) carrying

worn-out bows—many a Bowman having but a single arrow, and many an arrow winged with a single feather; and “thus they went forth to conquer a kingdom.” There is a poetical touch in this description which warrants us in treating it with some degree of qualification. Poor as the organisation must have been, the forces of “the Commons,” as they delighted to call themselves, were probably better than the mere riff-raff of the country-side.

The men of Kent, “hearing of this thing which they had so often prayed for,” immediately roused the whole county, blocked the roads, and, stopping every traveller, made him swear—“That he would be loyal to King Richard and to the Commons; that he would have no King of the name of John; that he would be ready when sent for to come and join them; that he would persuade all his neighbours and acquaintance to hold with them; and that he would not agree or consent to the raising of any taxes in the kingdom thenceforth except only the fifteenths which their fathers and ancestors had known and agreed to.” Then they liberated John Ball at Maidstone, as already stated, and proceeded by way of Canterbury and Rochester along the northern road to London.

The news spread to Sussex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, and Norfolk, and all men’s minds were divided between hope and dread. “Men commonly said to each other that there would be a division of the kingdom owing to these occurrences, and that England would be devastated and destroyed.” And when the number of the rebels daily

increased, until they were past counting, and they no longer feared resistance, they began to show what they had in their minds. "Every single man who knew anything about the law of land-holding, whether clerks or venerable justices, and all the jurators of the land whom they had any reason to fear, they slew without compunction, declaring that the land could never enjoy freedom until these had been put to death. That kind of talk pleased the rustics immensely; and, passing from small things to greater, they determined to set fire to all the rolls and ancient records in the court-houses; so that, when they had wiped out the memory of the olden time, their lords would not in future be able to establish a claim over them." They also took special care to burn the tax-rolls, on which their assessment for poll-tax was recorded.

So, for some time, the leaderless mobs hung about in their several counties, whilst the lords and men of substance concealed themselves in their dwellings, or fled to a distance, or paid ransom in one form or another. Meanwhile "the Kentishmen and the Essexmen drew together and formed an army, of about a hundred thousand common people and rustics." That is all that Walsingham can tell us of the creation of the first army which marched on London by way of Blackheath. It is probable, however, that Blackheath was simply the common rendezvous for the south-eastern counties, whilst the men of the eastern counties met at Mile End. The Essex men would naturally make direct for the eastern gate of the city, though some of them may

have been drawn to Blackheath in order to meet John Ball. One of Ball's lieutenants, Jack Straw, seems to have crossed the Thames at an earlier date, with a few companions, for the purpose of rousing the southern shire and opening the gates of Maidstone jail.

On Blackheath there was a more or less orderly muster. Wat Tyler, who had served in France, was at the head of this contingent, and seems to have kept it well in hand whilst the fiery priest from Essex harangued and inflamed it. Commissioners from the King came to hear the demands of the peasants, and they were sent back with fair treatment and a moderate request from the leaders that they might have speech with their monarch. In the Council to which this message was reported Sudbury made the fatal mistake, in which he was supported by the Treasurer—Sir Robert Hales, prior of the Hospital of St. John,—of urging that the King should not receive the representatives of the rebels.

The story of the next few days need not be repeated here in detail; but so far as the spirit of the movement can be gathered from the words and acts of John Ball—who must certainly be classed as a Lollard, whether he was a professed disciple of Wyclif or not—it is worth while to take note of the general course of events.

The famous speech of Ball on Blackheath has been cited by the chroniclers and others as a distinct encouragement to violence and bloodshed. The simple question is whether we are to accept the testimony of his enemies, written down at the time when passion ran high, and by men who considered

him one of the worst and most dangerous culprits. At Blackheath, the chronicler tells us, there were two hundred thousand of the people gathered together, and the excommunicated priest improvised a pulpit and preached to as many as could hear him on the standing text of communism in all ages—

“ When Adam dalf, and Eve span,  
Who was then a gentleman ? ”

For all, said he, were made equal by nature from the beginning. Servitude was brought in by the unjust oppression of wicked men, against the will of God. If God had pleased to create slaves, he could have settled from the very beginning of the world who was to be a slave and who a master. Now let them remember that at last an opportunity had been given them by God to throw off the yoke of daily servitude. The time had come for them to enjoy, if they would make up their minds, the liberty for which they had craved so long. “ Be stout of heart,” he said, “ and, with the zeal of a good husbandman who tills his farm, rooting up and cutting down the noxious weeds which choke the crops, set to work now and do the same thing yourselves. First of all, you must kill off the great lords of England; then the lawyers,\* the justiciaries, and jurators must be put an end to; and last of all, cast out of your land all whom you think likely to hurt the Commons hereafter. In this way you will be able to obtain peace

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\* So in Shakspeare's *Henry VI.*, Part 2, Dick the Butcher says to Cade : “ The first thing we do, let 's kill all the lawyers.”

for yourselves and safety for the future. When all the great men are carried off, there will be equal liberty for all. Everyone shall be a noble, no one shall have greater dignity than another, and the power of all shall be the same."

If John Ball had been an agitator in the present century, and this account of his speech had been put into circulation by his enemies, he would have been able to write to the newspapers and challenge its accuracy or its veracity. As it was, he had no opportunity of checking the reports which were given of his sermons and speeches. If such opportunity had been allowed him in the Archbishop's court, he had learnt too surely that his levelling theories were opposed to the political and religious orthodoxies of his day, and that the more logically and even moderately they were put, the more insidious and dangerous they would appear. In that sense the "mad priest" was hopelessly out of court, born before his time, and (according to the ideas of his day) rightfully condemned. But it is only fair to him to say that there is no trustworthy evidence that he incited any man to slaughter, or that he intended the march on London to be anything more than an overwhelming demonstration of the popular grievances, which (he fondly thought) was to secure the triumph of right without striking a blow. That the mobs in many instances broke from the control of their leaders is perfectly true; and it is equally true that the leaders did what they could to restrain the violent. Thus when Lancaster's palace at the Savoy, which had narrowly escaped four years before,

was set on fire, the peasants seized a pillager who was making off with his booty and flung him into the blazing pile. "We have no mind to be thieves," they are reported to have said. Hate was far stronger in their breasts than greed. It is recorded that they pounded the Duke's jewels in mortars, trampled on his cloth of gold and embroidered silks, smashed the gold and silver plate, the spoils of many a hard fight, and hurled them into the Thames.

The Duke himself at this time was at the head of his troops in Scotland, and it is therefore inexact to say that he had fled before the storm. The facts connected with the death of Archbishop Sudbury and the Treasurer Hales are by no means clear; but the beheading on Tower Hill may be supposed to have been intended as an assertion by the "sovereign people" of its right to execute summary justice.

In the wallet of one of the Essex men, who suffered for his part in the great disturbance, a letter was found which was manifestly the composition of John Ball.

"John Schep, som tyme Seynt Marie prest of Yorke, and nowe of Colchestr, greteth welle Johan Nameles, and Johan the Mullere, and Johan Cartere, and biddeth hem that thei ware of gyle in borugh. And stondeth togiddir in Goddis name, and biddeth Peres Ploughman go to his werke, and chastise Hobbe the robber, and taketh with you Johan Trewman, and alle his felaws, and no mo, and loke scharpe you to on heved and no mo [obey one head and no more].

" Johan the Muller hath ygrownde smal, smal, smal ;  
 The Kyngis sone of hevene shall pay for alle.  
 Be ware or ye be wo,  
 Knoweth your frende fro youre foo,  
 Haveth ynowe, and seythe ' Hoo' :  
 And do welle and bettre, and fletch synne,  
 And seketh pees, and holde therynne.  
 And so biddeth Johan Trewman, and alle his felawes."

It may be said that in bidding Piers Ploughman to chastise Hobbe the robber, Ball was inciting to violence and even to bloodshed. But clearly the prevailing note of the significant document above quoted is one of peace and moderation—of course pre-supposing the intention to march on London and demand redress. The comparative elevation and morality of this and other appeals from the demagogue priest, which must have circulated in great numbers for some time before the outbreak, have been recognised in every generation. Ball did not always disguise his name. Here is one of his missives.

" John Ball greeteth you all,  
 And doth for to understand he hath rung your bell.  
 Now right and might,  
 Will and skill,  
 God speed every dele."

And another :

" Help truth, and truth shall help you.  
 Now reigneth pride in price,  
 And covetise is counted wise,  
 And lechery withouten shame,  
 And gluttony withouten blame.  
 Envy reigneth with treason,  
 And sloth is take in great season.  
 God do bote, for now is tyme."

Jack Miller, Jack Carter, Piers Ploughman, John Trewman, appear again and again in these moving appeals; and perhaps some of them, if not all, stood for the names of men who were familiar in the country-side. The parable of the mill was manifestly a favourite one amongst the rebels.

“ Jack Miller asketh help to turn his mill aright.  
He hath grounden small, small;  
The king’s son of heaven he shall pay for all.  
Look thy mill go aright with the four sails, and the post  
stand with steadfastness.  
With right and with might,  
With skill and with will;  
Let might help right,  
And skill go before will,  
And right before might,  
So goeth our mill aright.”

Unfortunately for the peasants, or at any rate for the victims on whom the worst of the vengeance was to fall, they could not or did not follow the advice of John Schep on all points. They did not stand together; guile overtook them in the borough, and they could not tell their friends from their foes. The vast majority of them unquestionably “sought peace and held therein,” but the few who became violent—and the turbulent citizens were perhaps more responsible for the violence than the rustics themselves—gave some sort of warrant for the repudiation of the terms which had been granted by Richard, and on the faith of which so many thousands of the serfs had gone quietly home.

There are but slight traces of generosity in the treatment of the peasants when all danger was at

an end, and authority had renewed its sway. The strong course would have been to confirm the amnesty and the emancipation, to compensate those who had suffered from mob violence, to keep the word of the King, and to maintain the supremacy and impartiality of the law. Richard's Council acted fairly enough in suggesting to Parliament that the serfs should have their liberty. The land-owners would not listen to it, wrongly supposing that things could be put back on their old footing, and urging that the King had no right to take away their chattels without their consent—which, said they, “we have never given, and never will give, if we were all to die on the same day.” That was at the beginning of the autumn session of 1381; and though many members came up prepared to think more of redress than of vengeance, the majority were bent on a policy of stern repression. It was determined that the promises extorted from the King by force were not binding, and ought not to be kept. Amongst these promises were a large number of individual manumissions, and some half-dozen charters of emancipation and pardon to the serfs of different counties, drawn up in the following terms :

“Richard by the grace of God King of England and France, and Lord of Ireland, to all his stewards and trusty servants to whom this present letter may come, greeting. Know ye that by our special grace we have manumitted all our lieges and bondmen of the county of —, and we have freed them from all bondage, themselves and each of them, and do satisfy them by these presents; and moreover we

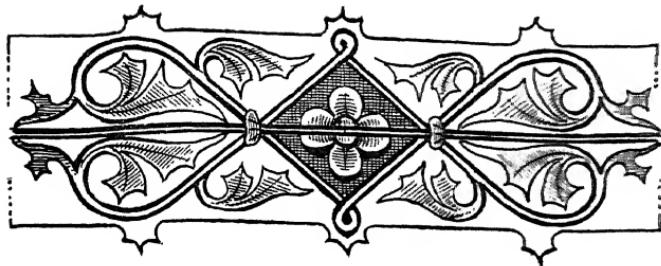
pardon the same our lieges and bondmen all their felonies, betrayals, transgressions and extortions of whatsoever kind, committed or perpetrated by themselves or others, as well as any outlawry, if any such shall have been pronounced against them, or any of them, in consequence of these events; and furthermore we grant them, and each of them, absolute peace. In testimony whereof we have caused these our letters patent to be drawn up. As witness our hand, at London, on the fifteenth day of June, in the fourth year of our reign."

It was on the faith of these charters that the men of Essex, Hertford, and other counties left London without striking a blow. Some at least of the King's promises were made of his own accord, when he bravely faced the seething crowds, before there had been any violence in the streets. At no time was he himself in duress or danger; and to contend that he ought not to keep terms with his subjects, when it would have been a point of honour to do so with a foreign enemy, was no more reasonable than it was to urge that a Plantagenet King in the later feudal age was not entitled to insist on the emancipation of the serfs.

The King's attendants and the City authorities, who had lost their nerve in presence of the immense crowds of rustics, seem to have taken heart again as soon as they had seen the dead body of Tyler, and the last contingent of the rebels had disappeared from the capital. The worst was over; henceforth the marshal could answer at any rate for the streets of London ; and, if there were to be further troubles

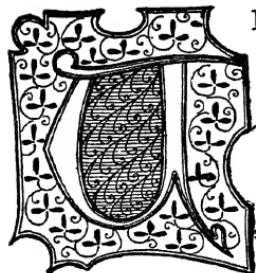
in the counties, they could be dealt with in detail by the royal forces. It must have been patent to everybody that the strength of the rebellion was broken; and no man would see this more plainly than John Ball, who knew his countrymen so thoroughly. Even if he had faith to believe that the serfs had not struck their blow for freedom utterly in vain, he must have felt that he and his immediate friends had nothing to expect from the clemency of their enemies. He fled without delay to his native town of Coventry, and after a few days, probably recognised and betrayed by some one who knew him, the "mad priest" was captured in an old ruin—so Froissart tells us—and taken before the King at St. Albans. The unfortunate man had a short shrift; he was condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and the sentence was carried out in Richard's presence on the 15th of July.





## CHAPTER XVI.

### COURTENAY'S TRIUMPH.



ON Wyclif and his friends the effects of the Peasants' Revolt could not fail to be very disastrous. The King's Council was not satisfied with the vengeance which it had executed throughout the disturbed districts, with violating the young King's pledges,

annulling the manumissions and indemnities granted to the serfs, and attempting to rivet their chains more securely than ever. It determined to curb the spirit of Wyclif and his Poor Priests, believing or feigning to believe that they were in part responsible for the outbreak. In most of these measures it required the assistance of Parliament, and it might have been thought that reaction in the country, added to the influence of the King's uncles and principal officers, would have ensured the elec-

tion of a series of Parliaments more than ready to acquiesce in legislation of a reactionary character. But it was not so. The Lords were amenable, and in some particulars they took the lead in a policy of vengeance or panic; but when in 1382 the bishops and barons voted that Wyclif's Priests should be silenced and suppressed, the Commons disagreed with the ordinance, which never became a statute. Three years later another House of Commons rose to the heroic level of voting the appropriation of the Church endowments to secular uses. The Lords promptly refused their co-operation; but the action of the more representative House showed that some at least of the new doctrines were firmly rooted in English soil.

Courtenay became Primate of England after the death of Sudbury, and a few days later he was created Chancellor. He preached to the two Houses in English; and if by any chance he thought it timely to enlarge upon the virtues of fidelity and good faith, it may easily be imagined that the Lords and Commons would listen to him at that moment with very little patience, for the mood of forgiveness was not upon them. Parliament met, and Courtenay preached his sermon, on the 9th of November, 1381; nine days later he resigned the great seal. It is at any rate not improbable that he did this through lack of stomach for the work of undoing all the King's pledges—voluntary and spontaneous, as well as forced—and of sanctioning the continued severities of Tressilian and the other justiciaries. According to one account, an actual petition of Parliament

for a new Chancellor compelled Courtenay's retirement. It was not until the following January, on the marriage of the King to Anne of Bohemia, that the beheadings and burnings and disembowellings ceased, and the seven thousand victims were held to have paid the debt of revolt.

But it was necessary that Wyclif also should suffer for the suspicions which had fallen upon him. He was accused of having contributed to bring about the disorders, and there would naturally be a prejudice against him in the minds of some who had hitherto favoured his cause. In the spring of 1382 Courtenay was directed by Parliament to inquire into the doctrines of the Rector of Lutterworth, on the express ground that he and his preachers had disturbed the peace of the realm. It is doubtful how far this mandate proceeded from a majority in both Houses ; and, considering that the Commons soon afterwards refused to agree to the suppression of the Poor Priests when this had been proposed by the bishops and barons, it seems unlikely that the popular representatives should have ordered the proceedings against Wyclif in a message which so entirely prejudged his case. We can easily imagine what arguments the primate would employ to convince the Lords of the wisdom and necessity of a prosecution. When John Ball had been condemned to death Courtenay had obtained for him a respite of two days, during which he had wrestled with the "mad priest" for his soul ; and he may have been able to assure his colleagues in perfect good faith that he had traced out all the ramifications of the doctrine

which began in the schools and the Latin treatise, and ended in revolt against the government and the assassination of the chief ministers of the Crown.

However this may have been, Courtenay lost no time in proceeding once more against the redoubtable Oxford professor, and with a better assurance of success than on either of the former occasions when he had set the machinery of the Church in motion. He had no longer much to fear, if anything, from John of Gaunt, who had cooled very considerably towards Wyclif and his friends, even before the terrible scare which the peasants had given him a year ago. Poor Sudbury, too, the mild and irresolute, had gone to his account, and there was no power in the land which was able, or disposed, to interfere with the exercise of his authority.

As soon as the session was over he summoned a Synod of the English Church to meet him, on the 21st of May, in the priory of the Dominicans in Holborn ("apud *Prædicatores*"). There were present in this assembly ten bishops, including Courtenay himself, Robert of London, William of Winchester, John of Lincoln, Thomas of Exeter, John of Durham, John of Hereford, Ralph of Salisbury, Thomas of Rochester, and William Botelle-sham of Nantes—the latter being an old friar. The doctors of theology in addition to these were four Carmelites—Glamvile and Dysse of Cambridge, Lovey and Kynyngham of Oxford; three Dominicans—Sywarde and Langeley of Oxford, and Parys of Cambridge; four Augustinians—Ascheburn and Bankin of Oxford, Hormenton of Cambridge, and

Waldeby of **Toulouse**; four Franciscans—Karlelle and Bernewell of **Oxford**, Folvyle and Frysby of Cambridge; and the Benedictine monk John Wells of Ramsey. There were also eleven doctors of law, two bachelors of law, and seven bachelors of theology, including **Bloxham**, custos of Merton, Humbleton and two other **Dominicans**, two Carmelites, and a Franciscan.

This was not the full number summoned by Courtenay. **Rygge**, the Chancellor of Oxford, was not present, nor did Wyclif himself put in an appearance, being very possibly out of health. Dr. James asserts in his *Apology* that Wyclif "voluntarily absented himself, because he knew that the bishops had plotted his death by the way, devising the means and encouraging men thereunto." This is not at all likely, though the suspicion may have been entertained. It is more than probable that the Reformer's friends dissuaded him from going to London, through fear that his death might follow on his condemnation. It would be impossible, in the light of subsequent events, to admit that such fears were groundless. Or it may have been that Wyclif had good cause to know that he would at least be arrested if he left Oxford in 1382. Parliament as well as the bishops was now against him, and for the moment **Oxford** was perhaps the only place in the country where he could be free from the danger of arrest. In his absence the Synod discussed the conclusions which had been attributed to him, and condemned ten of them as distinct heresies and fourteen more as erroneous.

Whilst the discussion was proceeding, the hall in which the Council sat was shaken by an earthquake. It may well be supposed that Wyclif's friends—if there were any present, which seems doubtful—would claim this portent as a sign from Heaven in his favour; and even the most orthodox of the clergy must have been startled and perturbed. One cannot but admire the splendid courage of Courtenay, who instantly turned the shock to good account; for, he said, as the earth expelled its ill humours with so much vehemence and convulsion, they ought to take it as a happy omen for the expulsion of ill humours from the Church of Christ.

The Synod was then adjourned until the 12th of June, at the same time and place; and in the meantime the Primate took measures to make an impression on the obstinate spirits at Oxford, who under Chancellor Rygge still remained loyal to their friend. On the 28th of May Courtenay sent his missive to Peter Stokys, a friar of the Carmelite Order, and a "professor of the sacred page." The prelates of the Church, he said, owed it to the lambs to warn them against wolves in sheep's clothing. There were certain "sons of eternal damnation" who, "under a cloak of great sanctity," claimed authority to preach in spite of prohibition a number of heretical, erroneous, and false conclusions, already condemned by the Church, and contrary to decisions of the ecclesiastical authorities, "which threaten to overturn the Church and the peace of the nation." These men are not afraid to assert and publicly teach the errors in question, "not only in the churches but also in

the open squares and other unconsecrated places within our province of Canterbury." Therefore the Archbishop had called together a number of doctors of theology and professors of the canon and civil law, with other clerics of repute, that they might give an opinion thereon. By them it was found and declared that of the said conclusions some were heretical, whilst others were erroneous and contrary to decisions of the Church.

The Archbishop therefore commands Friar Peter to warn and inhibit any who preach or defend such doctrine, of whatever state or condition they may be, in the University of Oxford, in the schools or outside, in public or in private, and any who shall listen to those who preach it, or shall favour or consort with them in public or in private. They are to be fled from and avoided like a snake emitting deadly poison, under penalty of the greater excommunication.

To this missive the Primate added a list of the heresies and errors which had been condemned by the Synod of Blackfriars—namely, ten heresies and fourteen erroneous conclusions. The heresies are as follows:

"1. That the material substances of bread and wine continue after consecration in the sacrament of the altar.

"2. The bread and wine do not remain in the same sacrament *sine subiecto* (as accidents without substance).

"3. Christ is not in the sacrament of the altar identically, truly, and really in his proper corporeal personality.

"4. If a bishop or a priest is in mortal sin, he does not ordain, consecrate, or baptize.

"5. If a man is in a fit condition of soul, external confession is superfluous and even invalid for him.

"6. There is no authority in the Gospel for declaring that Christ ordained the mass.

"7. God is constrained to give place to the devil.

"8. If the Pope is a reprobate and wicked man, and consequently a member of the devil, he has no power over Christ's faithful people assigned to him by anyone, unless it be by Cæsar (that is, temporal).

"9. After Urban VI. no one else ought to be elected as Pope, but we ought to live in the manner of the Greeks, under our own laws.

"10. It is contrary to Holy Scripture for ecclesiastics to hold temporal possessions."

At the same time that he wrote to Peter Stokys, the Archbishop sent a letter to Chancellor Rygge, expressing his surprise at the favour which had been shown by him to Master Nicholas Hereford—who had just been appointed to preach before the University—exhorting him thenceforth to amend his ways, lest he should himself appear to be one of the heretical sect, and it should be "our duty thereon to exercise our authority against you." And the Chancellor is enjoined to assist Stokys in giving publicity to the Archbishop's denunciation.

Courtenay was grimly in earnest: but he had some trouble yet before he could make his will prevail. After receiving his letter, Dr. Rygge appointed Repyngdon, another Wycliffite, to preach before the University. It is evident that he was only in-

terpreting the spirit of Oxford, so far as the academic element was concerned. The Lollards, as they now began to be generally called, were in favour; the University men would not hear them ill spoken of, and applauded those who did them honour. Rygge gave Stokys no active assistance, and the Carmelite wrote to Courtenay saying that he dare not carry out his behests for fear of death. The defiance was open and aggressive. Not only did Repyngdon call the men who had been condemned by Courtenay holy priests, and contrast their morality with the abuses which were rife amongst the wealthier clergy, but when Stokys came into the schools and prepared to inhibit him in the name of the Archbishop, the scholars drew their arms and threatened his life. Then he hurried back to London, leaving the Wycliffites masters of the field. Courtenay, naturally enraged at this resistance to his authority, sent such an urgent summons to the Chancellor, calling upon him to attend the adjourned meeting of the Synod on June 12th, that Rygge did not venture to disobey.

By way of celebrating the long-desired condemnation of the teaching of Wyclif—which was completed at the first sitting of the Synod—and possibly at the same time commemorating the irruption of the peasants and the murder of Sudbury, the bishops and clergy determined upon a grand open-air procession on Whitsunday. The people of London were already keen for a pageant of any kind, and they gathered together in crowds to see the priests and devout laymen marching barefoot through the

city and suburbs, chaunting the litany and penitential psalms. After the procession John Kynyngham, the Carmelite Friar (who is said to have been John of Gaunt's confessor, though he certainly had no sympathy with the Duke's admiration for Wyclif—against whose Latin treatise *De Esse* he had argued long and drily twenty years ago), preached a sermon before his brethren of the Synod, and publicly repeated their condemnation of the Oxford heresies. He pointed the moral of the great act of expiation which had just been performed for the violated sanctity of the mass; and, if the reports of his friends are to be believed, he effected at least one noteworthy conversion. A certain Cornelius Clonne, an old soldier and a Lollard, was turned from the error of his ways; and so strongly was he affected by the exposure of Wyclif's blasphemies that on the following day, whilst attending mass in the church of the Black Friars, he saw with his own eyes . . . Perhaps there is no need to repeat exactly what he saw; but it was a conclusive argument against both Wyclif and the orthodox clergy; for, if it was not material bread and wine, it was just as little the accidents of the consecrated host without a subject.

On the 12th of June the Synod met again in Holborn; and there were present, in addition to many of those who had met in May, Robert Rygge, Laundreyn and Brygtwell, Peter Stokys and Henry Crompe, Radeclyff, Sutbraye, the monk of St. Alban's, Bromyerde, a Black friar from Cambridge, with two other doctors of law and two bachelors of theology. Stokys would now be able to repeat the

story of his treatment at Oxford ; but it was not until the next meeting that Crompe was in a position to relate how he had been suspended by the masters for speaking of Wyclif and his followers as heretics. The most striking feature of this second sitting was the humble submission of the Chancellor, who is said to have gone on his knees to the Archbishop, and accepted the discipline of Holy Church. His forgiveness was made conditional on his assisting to extirpate the condemned doctrine from the University ; but when the Primate gave him the proclamation, which denounced Hereford, Repyngdon, John Aston, and Laurence Bedenham, suspending them from their functions, he protested that it would cost him his life to enforce it.

"Then," said Courtenay, "your University is an open fautor of heretics, if it suffers not the truth to be proclaimed within its limits."

Rygge went back to Oxford, and doubtless made his friends acquainted with the decision of the Archbishop ; but he certainly took no action against them. He had, it seems most probable, been elected this year as the champion of the Wycliffite party, and could not have retained the chancellorship if he had turned round on his supporters.

Courtenay meanwhile had brought other influences to bear upon the Lollards. Parliament (at any rate the Lords and the King's Council) gave him the assistance which they had promised. The Duke of Lancaster made the Wycliffites understand that they would receive no further help from him ; and in all probability Wyclif himself was ill at this moment.

Bedenham is not mentioned as having appeared before the Synod, but the other three who had been suspended now thought it prudent, or were constrained, to answer the citation of the Primate.

The third sitting had been fixed for June 14th. Hereford, Aston, and Repyngdon put in an appearance, but refused to make the recantation which Courtenay demanded. He gave them a short respite, and appointed a fourth meeting for June 20th. In the interval Aston—himself one of the Poor Priests against whom the tide had turned so strongly—drew up a manifesto for his friends outside, in which he boldly re-stated his conclusions. The result was that when the Synod met again he was formally condemned as a heretic. But once more the haughty prelate—four years after the memorable trial at Lambeth—was interrupted by an incursion of Londoners, who had been moved by Aston's appeal, and could not restrain themselves when they heard that he had been condemned. They might indeed have been headed by the same worthy draper, John of Northampton, who came to the help of Wyclif in the Archbishop's chapel, for he was still a warm sympathiser with the Lollards, and had not yet risen to the dignity of the mayoralty. Courtenay gave Hereford and Repyngdon another eight days in which to make submission, afterwards postponing the date to the 1st of July; and, as he had no mind to be interfered with in the discharge of his duty by the obstreperous citizens, he changed the place of meeting on this occasion to Canterbury. There were six new doctors at the

fifth and final sitting of the Synod, including William Berton, who had already pronounced against Wyclif at Oxford.

Neither Hereford nor Repyngdon put in an appearance at Canterbury, and they were both condemned in their absence. From the final record of the Synod it appeared that Courtenay had collected seventy-three signatures to the formal condemnation of Wyclif's conclusions.

One of the most entertaining of the songs, Latin or English, bearing upon the events of this period, which have been preserved in the Cotton manuscripts, and printed by Mr. Wright in the Rolls Series, deals with the Council of 1382. It refers to the plague, the Peasants' Revolt, and the earthquake, as well as to sundry characters in the drama of Wyclif's life with whom the reader is already acquainted. It may perhaps be a pardonable licence to quote three or four of the more pertinent stanzas of this Wycliffite poem.

“ *Armacam quem cœlo Dominus coronavit,  
Discordes tantomodo fratres adunavit ;  
Sed magno miraculo Wyclif coruscavit,  
Cum fratres et monachos simul collocavit.*  
With an O and an I, consortes effecti,  
Quovis adversario dicunt, sunt protecti.

“ *Tunc primus determinans est Johannes Wellis,  
Istos viros reprobans cum verbis tenellis,  
Multum conversatus est ventis et procellis ;  
Hinc in ejus facie patet color fellis.*  
With an O and an I, in scholis non prodest,  
Imago faciei monstrat qualis hic est.

“ Hic promisit in scholis quod vellet probare  
 Wyclif et Herford simul dictis repugnare ;  
 Sed cum hic nescierat plus argumentare,  
 Nichol solvens omnia jussit Bayard stare.

With an O and an I, Wellis replicabat ;  
 Sed postquam Nichol solverat, tunc Johannes stabat.

“ Tunc accessit alias, Stokis nominatus,  
 Rufus naturaliter, et veste dealbatus,  
 Omnibus impatiens, et nimis elatus,  
 Et contra veridicos dirigens conatus.

With an O and an I, sub tam rubra pelle  
 Animus non habitat nisi unctus felle.”

The entry made in the Archbishop's register by Courtenay's direction, relating to the condemnation of Wyclif in 1382, is printed by Wilkins in his *Councils of Great Britain*. It is of course set forth in Latin, and is to the following effect.

“ Whereas it was matter of common repute amongst the nobles and the people of England that certain heretical conclusions, and some which were erroneous, and contrary to decisions of the Church, which aim at overthrowing the entire Church, and our province of Canterbury, and the peace of the realm, had been generally, commonly, and publicly professed in various places within our said province; we, William, by Divine permission Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and legate of the Apostolic See, having taken cognisance of these matters, and being minded to exercise the functions of our office, called together certain venerable brethren, our suffragans and others, and many doctors of the sacred page, of the canon and civil

law, and bachelors, all of whom we believed to be the most reputed and able of the realm, and most devout in maintaining the Catholic faith, whose names are included below. And on the 7th day of May, A. D. 1382, in a chamber within the confines of the priory of the Preaching Friars of London, under our presidency, when our aforesaid brethren had been called together and were in personal attendance, the conclusions already mentioned, the tenor of which is given below, were openly stated and read in a clear and distinct voice; and we charged our aforesaid brethren, and the doctors and bachelors, by the faith whereby they were bound to our Lord Jesus Christ, and as they expected to answer at the day of judgment before the Supreme Judge, that they all and each should declare to us their opinion concerning the said conclusions.

"And finally, when a discussion had been held thereon, on the 21st day of the same month, our said brethren with the doctors and bachelors appearing before us in the same chamber, and the said conclusions having been read out a second time and plainly expounded, when we and all who were present had expressed our opinion, it was declared—that of the said conclusions some were heretical, and others erroneous, and contrary to the decisions of the Church, as more clearly appears below. And whereas we have discovered, on sufficient information, that the said conclusions have been taught in many places within our province as aforementioned, and that particular persons have held and taught some of them, and that they have been strongly

and notoriously suspected of heresy, we have taken the following proceedings both general and particular."

Long entries follow in the same register, detailing the inquiries held by Courtenay at the other sittings, as already recorded. But as they give us little or nothing in the shape of question and answer, and baldly recite the opinions and acts of the Archbishop himself, they are hardly worth the space which their transcription would occupy.

Courtenay had struck a shrewd blow at what he naturally considered a pestilent and fatal heresy; and perhaps there was not another bishop on the bench who would have done it half so thoroughly. But if he flattered himself that his end was gained when Wyclif had been declared a heretic, and his principal supporters had been excommunicated, he would soon be undeceived on that point. The probability is that he knew the strength of Lollardy too well to suppose that it had been absolutely crushed by his Synod, or that either pope or bishop or monk would be strong enough to stem and to turn the advancing tide of rationalism in matters of doctrine. None the less did he fight a strong and resolute battle for the faith as he conceived it. He fought, moreover, so far as one can see, fairly and aboveboard, taking no mean advantage, giving plenty of notice and warning, as ready to remove his censures as to impose them, whenever a rebel against the authority of the Church submitted himself to her maternal discipline. No one could be more unyielding, more stern and arbitrary in the

face of defiant opposition. No one, if his acts have been read aright, could be more magnanimous in victory.

In Wyclif, if in Wyclif only, he found a will and a resolution to match his own. Wyclif never yielded to him—nor to Parliament, nor to King, nor to Pope. There is one thing stronger than the strongest authority that was ever set up, and that is the spirit of revolt against wrong based upon an overwhelming conviction of truth. Wyclif had such a conviction, and nothing on earth could shake him.

“ Justum ac tenacem propositi virum  
. . . Si fractus illabatur orbis,  
Impavidum ferient ruinae.”

And assuredly Wyclif had suffered and was yet to suffer more than enough to convulse a stronger man. His life had been a perpetual struggle, and within the last seven or eight years he was never free from keen antagonism. The friars and monks had poured the vials of their wrath upon him. One Pope had launched five bulls against him, and another was already being urged to summon him to Rome. The Primate and nine bishops had solemnly denounced him as a heretic. The Chancellor of his beloved University had condemned him in the open schools, and forbidden him to teach what he believed to be true. He had passed through dark clouds of suspicion; the mother and the uncle of the King had ceased to defend him; Parliament, which used to ask for and follow his advice, had arraigned him as a disturber of the public peace. His most formidable enemy, at

the head of the English Church, had smitten his friends, hip and thigh, until they were either dispersed or beginning to fail in the hour of persecution ; and now the hand of God was upon him, and he must have felt in 1382 that his days on earth were numbered. "All thy storms have gone over me," he might have said ; "I am feeble and sore smitten ; mine enemies close me in on every side." Who could have wondered if he had faltered in the end of his life, if he had shown one moment's weakness, or compromised himself by one impatient word ? But he did nothing of this kind. He stands out to the last, amid the storm and stress of persecution, as firm as the cliff in Teesdale from which he took his name.

Wyclif addressed an independent petition to Parliament, on May 6, 1382, urging the authorities of the realm to support the simple faith of Christ, independently of the errors by which it has been overlaid. As to the form of this petition there is not a little uncertainty, for whilst some manuscripts have preserved a long "Complainte to King and Parliament" in English, consisting of four main clauses amply expounded, Walsingham briefly recapitulates seven points, which do not correspond with the English document. Walsingham's "seven interpretations" are as follows :

1. Neither the King nor the nation ought to yield to any external see or prelate.
2. The money of the realm ought not to be sent out of the country, to Rome, to Avignon, or elsewhere.
3. Neither cardinal nor any other man ought to take the revenue of a church or prebend in England unless he duly resides

there. 4. The King and his realm are bound to overthrow those who betray the realm. 5. The Commons of the realm ought not to be burdened by unaccustomed taxes, until the patrimony which has been given to the clergy has been exhausted. 6. If any bishop or beneficed curate has notoriously fallen into contempt of God, the King not only may but is bound to take away his temporal goods [entrusted to him by the Church]. 7. The King ought not to set a bishop or a curate in any secular office.

There is evidently not much in these propositions, unless it be in the fifth, which would make them particularly appropriate as coming from Wyclif at that crisis; and they had all been maintained, and in great measure admitted, by King, Parliament, and people, several years before. But the "Complainte" is a dignified and carefully considered paper, and might well have been presented to "our most noble and most worthi King Richard, kyng both of Englund and of Fraunce, and to the noble Duk of Lancastre, and to othere grete men of the rewme, bothe to seculers and men of holi Churche, that ben gaderid in the Parlement." The first point in this petition is that the rule of Christ is perfect and sufficient, without any other; that the clean religion of Christ was followed by the apostles, but it has been overlaid by monks and friars. If their rules agree with that of Christ, they should be known by Christ's name, not by that of Francis or Dominic. Therefore it is petitioned "that alle personnes of what kynne privat sectis, or singuler religioun, maad of sinful men, may freely, withouten eny lettinge or bodily peyne, leve

that privat reule or neue religion founded of sinful men, and stably holde the reule of Jesus Crist." The second demand is that all who have denied the power of the King to deal with the temporalities of the Church should be condemned. The third is that tithes and offerings should be taken away or withheld from clergy of immoral life.

"Ah, Lord God," Wyclif writes on this point, "is it reason to constrain the poor people to provide a worldly priest, however unworthy of life and of knowledge, in pomp and pride, covetise and envy, gluttony and drunkenness and lechery, in simony and heresy, with fat horse and jolly and gay saddles, and bridles ringing by the roadside, and himself with costly clothes and pelure, and to suffer their wives and children, and their poor neighbours, to perish for hunger, thirst, cold, and other mischiefs of the world? Ah, Lord Jesus Christ! since within few years men paid their tithes and offerings at their own will free, to good men and able, for the worship of God and the profit of Holy Church fighting on earth, must a worldly priest destroy this holy and approved custom, constraining men to abandon this freedom, and turning tithes and offerings into wicked uses!"

The fourth point in the petition—and it was probably for this in chief that Wyclif wrote and presented it—raises the special question of the sacrament, on which the Reformer had but recently declared himself, and which his enemies had magnified into the rankest and most unforgiveable of all his heresies. Let us return once more to Wyclif's

simple, rough, and nervous English. He prays "that Christis techinge and bileyve of the sacrament of his owne body, that is pleynly taught by Crist and his apostelis in gospellis and pistillis, may be taught opinly in chirchis to Cristen puple, and the contrarie teching and fals bileyve, brought up by cursed ypocritis and heretikis and worldly prestis, unkunnyng in Goddis lawe, distried. . . Dampne we this cursed heresie of Anticrist and his ypocritis and worldly prestis, seiynge that this sacrament is neither bred ne Cristis body, but accidentis withouten suget, and therunder is Cristis body. For this is not taught in holy writt."

Once again after his condemnation by the Synod of Blackfriars he came face to face with Courtenay—if we are to accept on this point the evidence of one or two contemporaries who are not invariably correct in dealing with the successive stages of his career. The resistance of Oxford to Courtenay's authority was not at an end when the decision of the seventy-three doctors had been made public; but Parliament or the King's Council armed the Primate with new powers, including that of imprisonment, and he went up to his old University in the middle of November in order to drive the nail home. On the 18th he held a Conference at St. Frideswide's, being attended by the Bishops of Lincoln, Norwich, London, Salisbury, Hereford, and Winchester.\* Knyghton tells us that Wyclif answered in person before this Conference; and he

\* Wykeham had just established his college for boys, and the walls of New College were steadily rising.

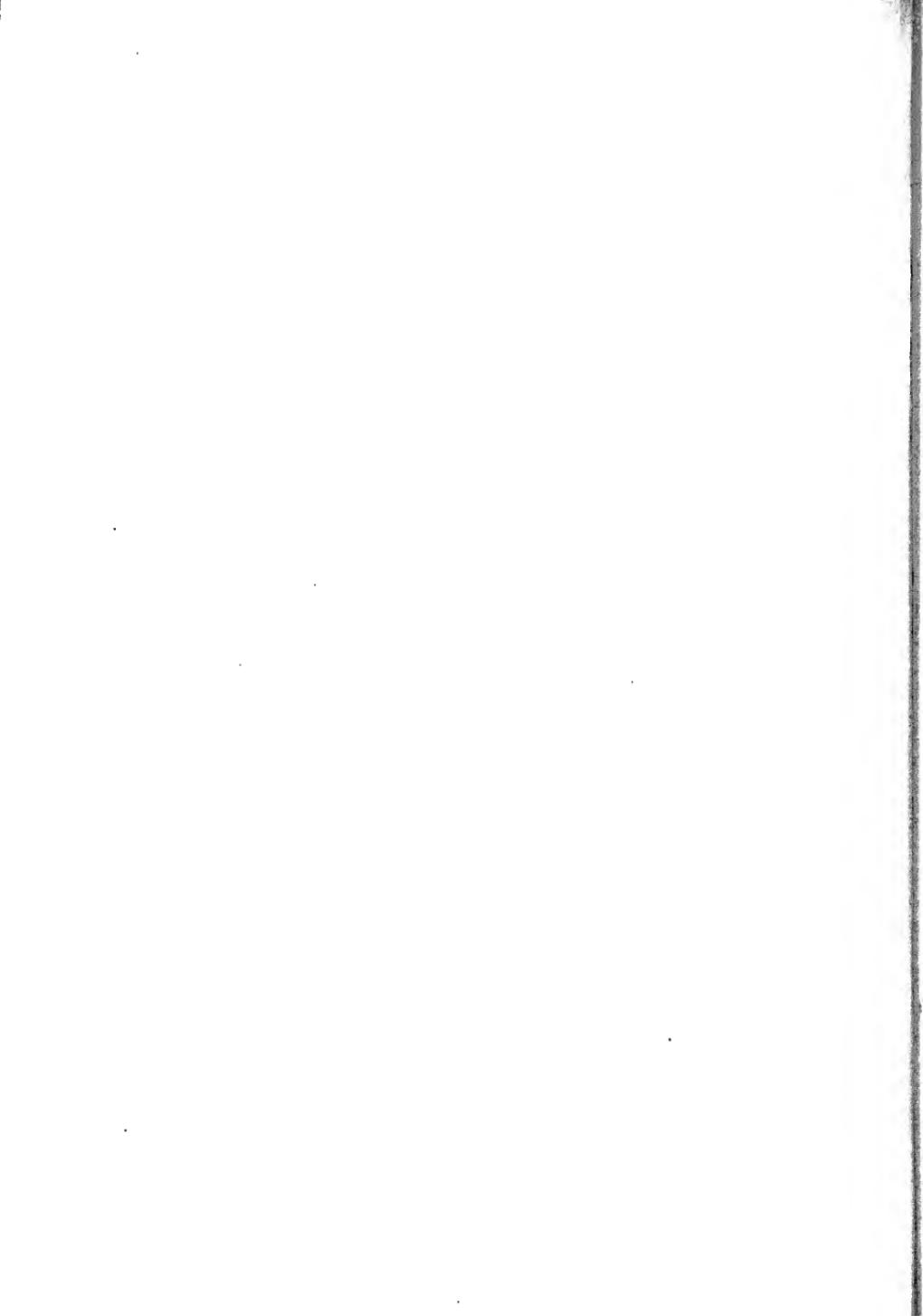
adds a document which he seems to regard as a withdrawal or submission on the part of the delinquent. It is clearly nothing of the kind. Wyclif merely repeats the general admission which he had made several times already concerning the spiritual identity of the consecrated host with the body of Christ ; and he ends substantially as follows :

" You must admit how great a difference there is between us who believe that this sacrament is actual and natural bread, and the heretics who tell us that it is an accident without a subject. For before the enemy and father of lies was loosed (in the first thousand years of Christendom), this ' gabbing ' was never devised. And how great a difference there is between us who believe that this sacrament is true bread in its kind, but sacramentally God's body, and the heretics who believe and tell us that this sacrament can in no way be God's body. For I am bold to say that, if this were truth, Christ and his saints were heretics, and the greater part of holy church at this moment believes in heresy. And herefor devout men suppose that this Council of Friars at London was with earth-din. For they put a heresy on Christ and the saints in heaven : wherefore the earth trembled, failing man's voice to answer for God, as it did in time of his passion, when he was condemned to bodily death.

" Christ and his mother (who destroyed all heresies in the ground) keep his Church in the true faith of this sacrament, and lead the King and his Government to require of her clerks and all her possessors, under penalty of losing their temporalities,



ST. FRIDESWIDE'S SHRINE.  
IN THE LATIN CHAPEL, CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, OXFORD.



that they teach truly the nature of the sacrament, and of all the Orders of Friars, under penalty of losing their privileges, that they do the same. For I am sure of the third part of the clergy, who maintain these positions here defined, that they will defend them at the cost of their lives."

If this confident reassertion and retort was in reality uttered by Wyclif in person before Courtenay, Wykeham, Gilbert, and the rest, we can easily imagine how it would trouble them, and perhaps exasperate them. Whether he did or did not see the bishops at this time depends very much upon the date of his first stroke of paralysis. One account, which comes to us at second or third hand, and which shall be quoted by and by, says that he had a minor stroke about two years before the major stroke which carried him off at the end of 1384. By the minor stroke it seems that he was partly disabled, and it may well be that movement was difficult for him in the year of the Synod, and that, in point of fact, those who wanted to see him had to come to the side of his couch or his study chair. Already in 1379, as we have seen, he had been seriously ill, and is described as calling on his attendants to raise him up in bed, and put him face forward before the aggressive friars. But then, at all events, he seems to have recovered both in body and in mental vigour. For the last two years of his life he was manifestly disabled; but this is precisely the period during which his active mind and hand were most productive. At any rate the period following his great conversion or perversion on the subject of the

sacrament, the four or five years following his first illness, found him constantly engaged in what turned out to be the main and most durable occupations of his life.

Meanwhile he was compelled to leave Oxford, and his brilliant university career of nearly half a century was brought to an end. He ceased to reside, probably ceased even to visit, ceased to lecture and determine, and contented himself with a quiet existence in his Lutterworth rectory. Courtenay's powers were sufficiently extensive to impose this retirement upon Wyclif, even if he had been unwilling to give up his Oxford work; and the Primate was not likely to be satisfied with anything less. Moreover, some of the men on whom the discipline of the Church had fallen were no longer able to stand by Wyclif's side; and, though there was still plenty of fight left in him, he would have found his position in the University untenable if he had persisted in defying the Primate. With a hostile Chancellor, with Rygge almost despairing of the cause, with Hereford, Aston, Repyngdon, and Bedenham either excommunicated, or submissive, or sedulously keeping out of the way, and with regulars and seculars combining against him, there was nothing for it but to bid farewell to the home in which his heart had become familiar, and to the focus of light and zeal which his own hand had done so much to maintain.

Oxford could ill afford to lose him. The last of the Schoolmen was gone, the dignity of the old scholastic learning had suffered a rude reverse, and the first sparks of the new enlightenment might seem to



WESTMACOTT'S MONUMENT OF WYCLIF AT LUTTERWORTH.



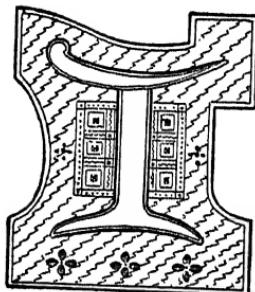
have been extinguished. Wyclif's presence had been so large, his influence over the thought of the University had been so commanding, that he had broken the narrower groove in which his own life began, whilst the groove which he made for others had been broken by the Church. After Wyclif, no scholar could be a Schoolman; and the new founts of scholarship, such as the spirit of inquiry, the hardihood of logic, the candour of an open mind, were in some sense under a ban. All studies and all books except those prescribed by special statutes were henceforth forbidden. Everything written by Wyclif, or by any of those who were alleged to have been his followers, was confiscated and destroyed. The golden age of Oxford had come to an end.





## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE LAST STAGE.



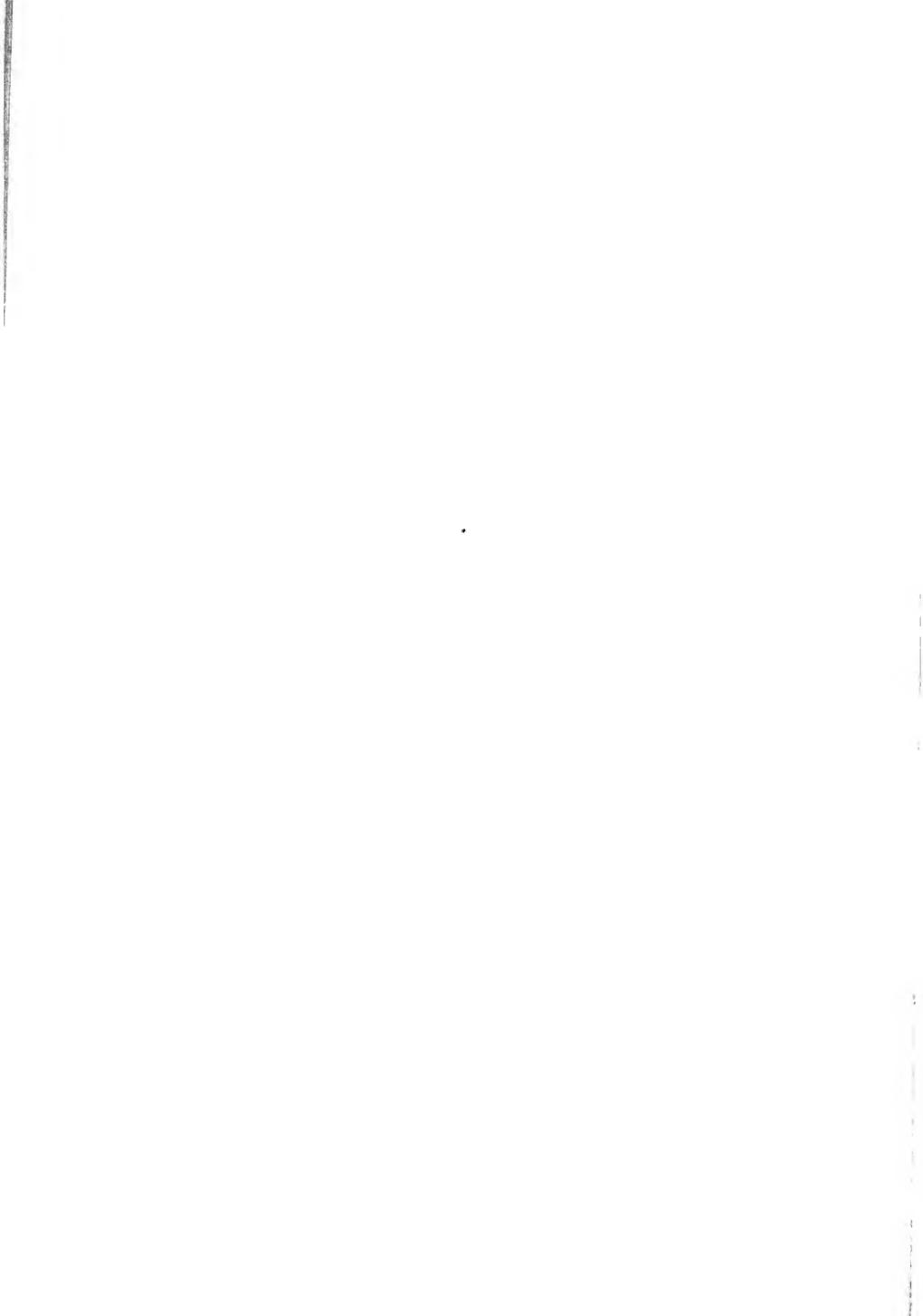
SOLATED at the end of his life, except for the few friends who gathered round him or came to see him in his Leicestershire parsonage, John Wyclif devoted himself more and more to his literary labours. In addition to the revised version of the Bible, of which something has been said in a previous chapter, he continued the writing and circulation of English treatises, without entirely abandoning the use of Latin. The *Trialogus*, for instance, which contains references to the attempted suppression of his Poor Priests, must have been produced in one of the last three years, probably in 1383\*; but it was in his

\* The *Trialogus* is in the form of a conversation on the nature of God, men, and angels, on virtue and sin, on grace and liberty; on the



*A Tabula penes Nobilissimum Ducom Dorsettum.*

JOHN WYCLIF.  
THE DORSET PORTRAIT.



mother tongue that he now almost invariably wrote, as though he would turn aside from the language of the men who had condemned his teaching, and seek a reversal of their judgment from those who, after all, had always commanded his best service and sympathies.

Before he left Oxford he had collected his English sermons, and had written some at least of the expositions in which he sought to simplify theology for unlearned readers. The last stage of Wyclif's life saw him virtually transformed into a writer of tracts for the times—not so much of controversial and political pamphlets as of expository tracts, clearly intended to give popular interpretations of Scripture and religious worship, for the benefit of humble folk who could understand no language but their mother tongue. He evidently believed that in thus writing he was

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sacraments, and on the four ends of man. Written as it was towards the close of Wyclif's life, it embodies most of his deliberate conclusions, and has consequently been a happy hunting-ground for the orthodox in search of heresies. The gist of what Wyclif has to say on every point is practically this: that where the Church and the Bible do not agree, we must prefer the Bible; that where authority and conscience appear to be rival guides, we shall be much safer in following conscience; that where the letter and the spirit seem to be in conflict, the spirit is above the letter. If the foundations of these maxims are true, it is clear that they afford scope for any number of logical hyperboles; and no acute writer of that age could by any possibility resist the tendency to hyperbole. Amongst the charges brought against Wyclif on the strength of the *Trialogus* was that he made light of the sacrament of marriage; and this merely because he wrote that "I will take this woman" is a stronger pledge than "I take this woman." He only meant that the intention was of greater importance than the act which displayed the intention; but his enemies twisted the saying into something very serious.

making his appeal to the great majority of the English Church, just as in his earlier life he had been addressing reasonable men and scholars throughout the various parts of Christendom. To the latter he had spoken directly, in the tongue common to learned men of all nations. Long since he had felt a compunction on behalf of the unlearned men of his own country, who had only been reached at second hand through the language of the schools and the Latin treatises. Now, when God had given him rest and seclusion, and had "laid his constraint upon him" (as he presently told Pope Urban), he was more than ever spurred to talk to his countrymen in a tongue which they could understand, and to use great plainness of speech, before the seal was set upon his lips, and the long night closed over him.

We have seen already that a large number of English tracts were written by members of the Wycliffite and Lollard school of thought, many of which were afterwards attributed to Wyclif himself; and it has been pointed out that it would be difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to establish a canon of authenticity in regard to them. An individual mind, familiar with the unquestioned works of Wyclif, might set apart to its own satisfaction the unsigned, undated, and generally untitled tracts which belong to the master, and not to any of his disciples. But at best it would be largely a matter of conjecture, and the result could never be definitive. The internal evidence derived from the language alone is of comparatively little value. We might get so far as to say with confidence "This text is northern,"

or "This writer spoke the same dialect as Langland," but it would be very hazardous to say, on the strength of so many vocables and grammatical forms, "Wyclif himself wrote this, and no other man of northern origin, of Oxford training, and of occasional sojourn in London." The English of the fourteenth century was in a specially plastic and evolutionary phase; the yeast of stimulated thought was constantly changing its form; the same writer presents a varying model at different stages of his life. Chaucer's prose is not identical in point of language with his poems; the *Knight's Tale* may be readily discriminated from his earlier essays in verse; and even in the same poem we find words which are used in two or more forms.

Wyclif doubtless varied in this way, as his contemporaries did; and thus we should be slow to say that a particular piece was either his or not his, on this score alone. But when we add to the testimony of the words that of idiom, manner, turn of expression, and habit of thought, unquestionably there is a better foundation to go upon. There are sundry English works which have been universally attributed to Wyclif, which raise no question in the mind, but rather produce a conviction of authenticity as they are read, and of which the date of writing is fixed between the years 1382 and 1384 by the mention of events then in progress.

Of these, two or three are especially characteristic of Wyclif—*The Church and Her Members*, the *Great Sentence of Curse*, and the tract on the *Schism of the Roman Pontiffs*. In each of them there is a reference

to the internecine war of the rival vicars of Christ—"the unkouthe discencion that is betwixt thes popes"—with further reference to the campaign in Flanders and the proclamations of Pope Urban and the English bishops on behalf of their crusade against the cross. In Wyclif's eyes, we may be sure, this particular outcome of the great Schism was the worst of the long series of scandals which had been presented to Christendom by the Papacy. It is probable enough that he would refer to it in everything which he wrote during his later years.

Bishop Despenser of Norwich, whom Urban appointed to lead the crusade against the friends of Pope Clement in Flanders, had been nominated to his see by papal provision when he was a young soldier of thirty. His martial tastes led him to take part in the suppression of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, when he attacked and dispersed John Littester's contingent at North Walsham. It was at the end of 1382 that Urban's bulls, proclaiming the crusade and granting plenary indulgence to all who took part in it, were sanctioned by the King and Parliament. Courtenay published them, and so no doubt did other bishops, including Despenser himself. The disastrous expedition lasted from May till September, 1383, and there would thus be nearly a year during which the subject was one of present interest in the minds of Englishmen, as well as a rock of offence to vast numbers of pious Churchmen.

Wyclif saw in this war of popes for temporal authority and possessions a striking instance and

confirmation of all that he had said about the corruptions of the Roman pontiffs in the second millennium. The majority of the friars, also, were enthusiastic about the crusade, and this was a fact which certainly would not tend to qualify the indignation of the old Reformer whom they had so persistently and successfully attacked. The tract on the Schism is largely occupied with a reasoned condemnation of the offer of indulgences for the special purpose and advantage of Pope Urban; and possibly this very tract provided Martin Luther, more than a century later, with some of his arguments against the huckstering of pardons in his own day.

In *The Church and Her Members*, Wyclif devotes one or two chapters to the misdeeds of the friars, and to the special injuries which they had brought upon the Church of Christ. "They despoil the people in many ways by hypocrisies and other falsehoods, and with the spoils they build Caym's castles,\* to the damage of the countries where they build them. They steal poor men's children, which is worse than stealing an ox; and they are particularly glad to steal heirs (I say nothing of the stealing of women) . . . They stir up nations to war, and peaceable men to lawsuits; they cause many divorces and many marriages without love, by the falsehoods which they tell, and by privileges of the court. I will not speak of the fighting that they do in one land or another, and of other bodily harms which

\* "Caim's Castles." This was Wyclif's name for the houses of the friars, made up of the initials of the Carmelites, Augustinians, Jacobites (Dominicans), and Minorites.

are too many for the tongue to tell. For, however much they waste the goods of men, so much and yet more do they bring hurt upon the nations, as in this last expedition that Englishmen made into Flanders, when they despoiled our realm of men and money, more than the friars have taken for themselves. And Englishmen did not for a moment doubt their bringing this expedition to pass, by their preaching, collecting, and personal exertions. Even the friars who seem to be blameless in this matter could not escape giving their assent ; for one manner of consent is when a man keeps silence, and does not speak up. And if friars are slipping out of it now, and saying that they never held with it, they are only resorting to their old craft of gabbing."

The sharp and spirited criticism which the old Rector of Lutterworth had directed for some time against the schismatics and their partisans must have shrewdly touched those to whom it particularly applied. The English friars, who had not for a moment ceased to rail and write against Wyclif, took the tracts of the impenitent heretic very much to heart, and the disgraceful failure of the Flanders crusade would doubtless exasperate their bitter animosity. They seem now to have sent fresh allegations of heresy to Rome, and Urban replied, after no long delay, by citing Wyclif to appear before his court.

If Urban knew the crippled state in which the English doctor had been living for more than a year, this summons to Rome was hardly less than barbarous. Though the Pope may not have known

it, the friars did; and the malignity of their hatred towards a brave enemy who was so evidently marked for early death may be judged from the persistency with which, under such circumstances, they tried to hurry forward the last stages of his prosecution.

Wyclif was unquestionably at this time disabled for travelling, and with the best intention he could not have made the long and troublesome journey to Urban's court. He therefore sent an excuse, with a formal statement of his attitude towards the Pope—writing it, of course, in Latin; and either he or one of his friends made the following English version, slightly amplified by the translator, in order that his countrymen might know why he had not obeyed the summons:

“I joyfully admit myself bound to tell to all true men the belief that I hold, and especially to the Pope; for I suppose that if my faith be rightful, and given of God, the Pope will gladly confirm it; and if my faith be error, the Pope will wisely amend it. I suppose, moreover, that the Gospel of Christ is the heart of the body of God’s law; for I believe that Jesus Christ, that gave in his own person his Gospel, is very God and very man, and by this heart passes all other laws. Above this, I suppose that the Pope is most obliged to the keeping of the Gospel among all men that live here; for the Pope is highest vicar that Christ has here in earth. For the superiority of Christ’s vicar is not measured by worldly superiority, but by this, that this vicar follows Christ more closely by virtuous living; for the Gospel teaches that this is the sentence of Christ.

"And from this Gospel I take it as a matter of belief that Christ, during the time he walked here, was the poorest of men, both in spirit and in goods; for Christ says that he had nought to rest his head upon. And Paul says that he was made needy for love of us. And poorer could no man be, neither bodily nor in spirit. And thus Christ put from him all manner of worldly lordship. For the Gospel of John tells that, when they would have made Christ king, he fled and hid himself from them, for he would have no such worldly greatness.

"And above this I accept it as a matter of belief that no man should follow the Pope, or any saint now in heaven, except in so far as he follows Christ. For John and James erred when they coveted worldly greatness; and Peter and Paul sinned also when they denied and blasphemed in Christ; but men should not follow them in this, for at that time they were parting from Jesus Christ. From this I take it as a sound counsel that the Pope should abandon his worldly lordship to worldly lords, as Christ has given them, and at once persuade all his clerks to do the same. For thus did Christ, and thus he taught his disciples, until the fiend had blinded this world. And it seems to some men that clerks who continue to abide in this error against the law of God, and cease to follow Christ in this, are open heretics, and such as support them are partners in their sin.

"And if I err in this opinion, I am willing meekly to be corrected—yea, even by death, if it beskilful [rightful], for that I hope would be a blessing to me. And if I might travel in my own person, I would with good

will go to the Pope. But God has laid his constraint upon me to the contrary, and has taught me to obey God rather than man. And I suppose of our Pope that he will not be Antichrist, and oppose Christ in his working, to the contrary of Christ's will ; for if he summon against reason, by himself or any of his servants, and follow up his unskilful summoning, he is an open Antichrist. And merciful intention did not save Peter from being called Satan by Christ ; so blind intention and wicked advice do not excuse the Pope here ; but if he require of true priests that they should travel more than is possible for them, he is not relieved from the charge of being Antichrist. For our faith teaches us that our blessed God suffers us not to be tempted beyond our ability. Why should man require such service?

“ Wherefore we pray to God for our Pope Urban VI., that his former good disposition may not be quenched by his enemies. And Christ, that may not lie, says that a man's enemies are specially those of his own household.”

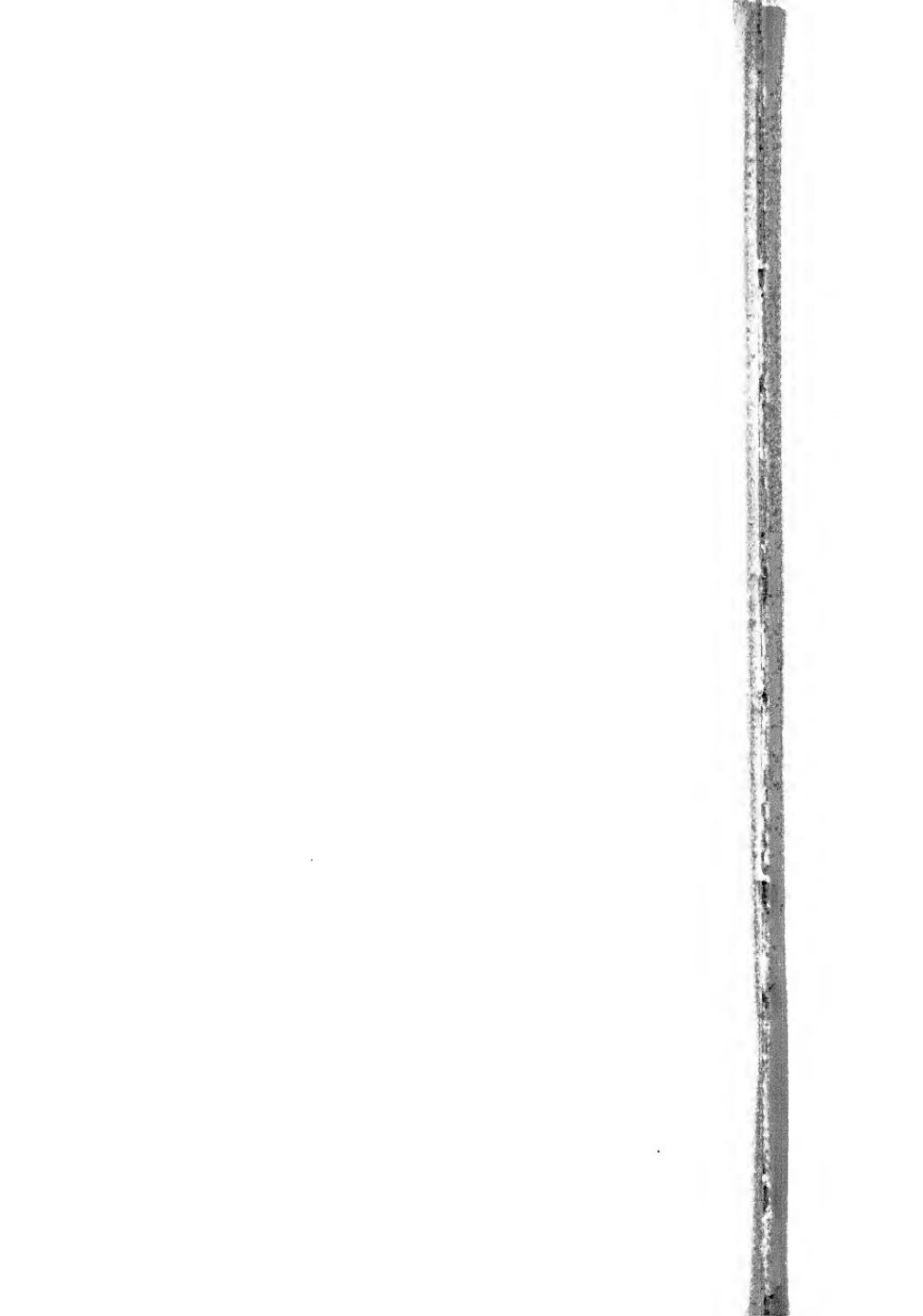
It was his last word to Rome. For all we know, it may have been the last word of controversy or argument which he wrote in his lifetime. The date of the citation is not ascertained, but this letter to the Pope was apparently one of the latest occurrences in Wyclif's life of which we possess any record. He lived till the close of 1384, and then, as was right and fitting, in his own church at Lutterworth, on the feast of the Holy Innocents, at the elevation of the host, in the very act of reasonable and reverent worship, the light went out. He lay

for a few days, watched and tended by those who had clung to him in his direst extremity, and who must have been prepared for this closing scene ever since the illness of 1382. Most of all, we may be sure, the veteran himself, who had continued his battle for the truth without the slightest intermission, had never buckled on his armour in the morning without reminding himself how feeble was the hold which he had upon life.

Wyclif's enemies could only regard his death from one point of view, as the judgment of God upon the greatest of sinners. The account of Walsingham is very much what we might expect of the pious and superstitious monk of St. Alban's. On the feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, he says, "Organum diabolicum, hostis Ecclesiæ, confusio vulgi, hæreticorum idolum, hypocitarum speculum, schismatis inceptor, odii seminator, mendacii fabricator, Johannes de Wyclif—whilst he was about to spue forth against Saint Thomas himself (as they tell us) invectives and blasphemies in the sermon which he had prepared to preach, was suddenly smitten by the judgment of God, and felt that paralysis had spread over his whole body. Thus his mouth, which had spoken high-swelling words against God and his saints, or against holy church, presented a horrid spectacle to those who gazed at him, being twisted out of shape; his tongue was stricken dumb and refused him utterance; his wagging head proclaimed that the curse of God against Cain had fallen upon him. And, as they who were present at his death inform us, he manifestly despaired in his last



RICHARD FLEMMYNG, BISHOP OF LINCOLN.  
FOUNDER OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD.



moments, so that all may recognise without doubt his affinity to Cain. And such was the end of all his wickedness."

But the most direct and credible testimony which has reached us concerning the death of Wyclif is that presented by Dr. Thomas Gascoigne, who wrote down in 1441 the sworn evidence of an eye-witness. The paper is not long, and it is of sufficient importance to be quoted in full.

"Master John Wyycliff, an English priest, was excommunicated after his death by Thomas Arundell, the lord bishop (*sic*) of Canterbury, and subsequently he was disinterred by a doctor of theology of Oxford, by name Master Richard Flemmyng, of the diocese of York, and now bishop of Lincoln; and his bones were burnt, and his ashes were scattered in a stream near to Lyttyrwort—by order of the pope Martin V.

"And the same Wyyclif was paralysed for two years before his death, and he died in the year of our Lord 1384, on the sabbath, on St. Sylvester's day, on the eve of the Circumcision; and in the same year, that is on the day of the Holy Innocents, as he was hearing mass in his church at Lyttyrwort, at the time of the elevation of the host, he fell down, smitten by a severe (*magna*) paralysis, especially in the tongue, so that neither then nor afterwards could he speak, to the moment of his death. He spoke indeed on going into his church, but being struck by paralysis on the same day he could not speak, nor did he ever speak again.

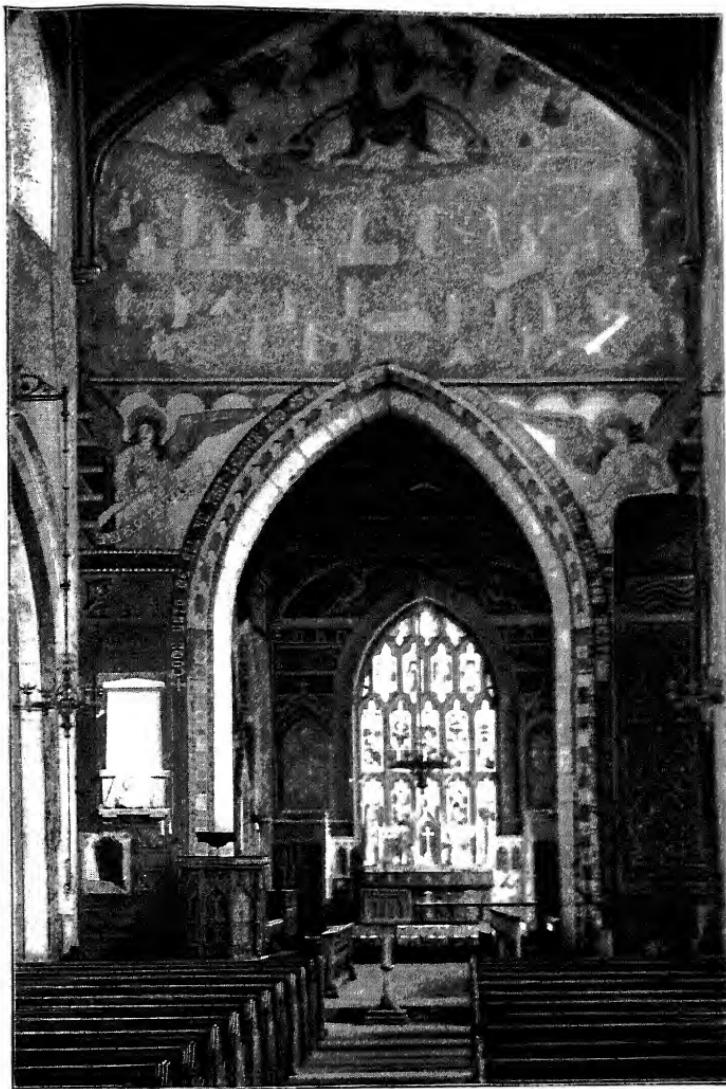
"John Horn, a priest of eighty years, who was a

parochial priest with Wyclyff for two years up to the day of Wyclyff's death, told me this, and confirmed it with an oath, saying: 'As I must answer before God, I know these statements to be true, and, as I witnessed, so have I given my evidence.'

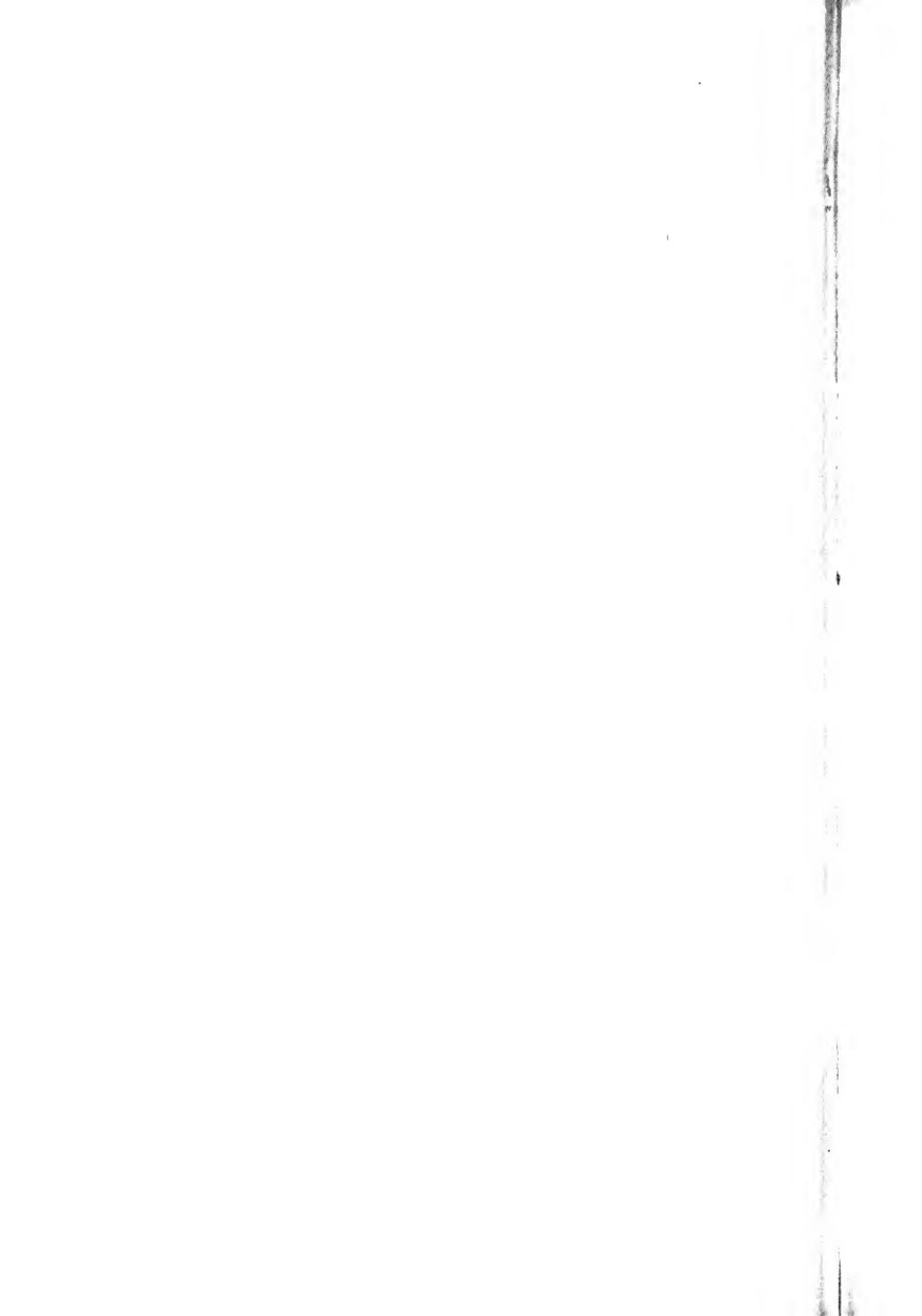
"The said John Horn related this, in the year of our Lord 1441, to me Doctor Gascoigne."

It seems to be a pious act, even if it be no more than that, to accept the statement of the old Lollard priest, which Netter of Walden—who might have seen both Horn and Gascoigne—included in his *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*. The picture that rises before us as we read these simple words may appropriately close the record of this half-obliterated, never-to-be forgotten life. Let us leave him so, the protagonist of the English Reformation, dying almost alone and forsaken, who had been the friend of princes and the withstander of popes; passing mutely from a world in which his voice had re-asserted the highest of human philosophies, and glowing like a star in the darkness with the fire of a yet unrisen sun.





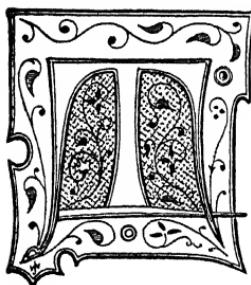
LUTTERWORTH CHURCH—INTERIOR.  
PARTLY CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH WYCLIF ; SHOWING AN ANCIENT FRESCO OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.





## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE WORK THAT LIVED.



HE story of Wyclif's life would not be complete if it did not take into account the effect of his work on those who came after him, and the strength of the links with which he bound himself to posterity. We have seen how

he was allied in his intellectual origin to the Schoolmen and the earlier Fathers of the Church; it is right that we should ask ourselves what was the measure of the return which he made to humanity for the influences under which he came to maturity. We have watched him, in the spring-time of the Modern Ages, sowing the seed of a new faith and a new devotion, whereof he must have seen for himself, before he died, the first green blades of a harvest that was to cover the land. Yet it is certain that the history of the Anglican Refor-

mation has often been told with less than adequate reference to the ideas and work of Wyclif, and to the first of that historic series of religious movements in Oxford which, perhaps once in every century, have pricked the conscience and remodelled the creed of England.

It may help us to form our final estimate of the man whose career we have been following, to gauge his strength and to understand his dynamic force, if we place ourselves for a moment at a Continental and Roman point of view, and look at Wyclif as he is regarded to-day by some of the more learned, moderate, and perhaps unprejudiced writers of the Church of Rome.

“*The History of the Popes*,” by Prof. Ludwig Pastor, which is recommended in a special brief by Leo XIII., and has been translated into English by Mr. Antrobus, a member of the Brompton Oratory, is a work of great research, containing much that is new to the historical student; and it is so far impartial that it frankly condemns many of the personal acts of Gregory XI., and his successors at Rome, especially during the Papal Schism. The German historian reflects the settled opinion of Roman Catholic writers when he says that “the errors of the Apocalypitics and the Waldenses, of Marsiglio, Ockham, and others, were all concentrated in Wyclif’s sect.” John Huss, he says again, “was not merely much influenced, but absolutely dominated by these ideas. Recent investigations have furnished incontestable evidence that, in the matter of doctrine, Huss owed everything to Wyclif.”

We have seen how it happened that the preachers and scholars of Bohemia learned and adopted the views of the English Reformer, and how the torch of free inquiry was passed over from the hands of Oxford to those of Prague. History is clear enough about the succession of ideas from Wyclif onward, but it would be difficult to show the descent of the scholastic and Wycliffite innovations from the Albigensian heresies, except on the principle of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. If the conclusions of Wyclif involved all those of the Vaudois, why not also those of the Arian Visigoths, and all the errors which had at any time germinated in that hotbed of religious crudities, the land of Languedoc? If the facts of transference between England and the continent had been the converse of what we know them to have been, and if Wyclif had taken his ideas from Bohemia, instead of giving his ideas to Bohemia, there would have been more ground for this theory of Waldensian origin. Unquestionably the Waldensian ideas were not obliterated by the Inquisition of Dominic and the crusade of Innocent III., but spread themselves to the eastward in Bavaria and Austria, and were found re-asserting themselves with inextinguishable energy throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Prof. Pastor himself, referring to the disastrous time of the great Schism, says: "It was not only in Southern Germany and the Rhine country, the two centres of Mediæval heresy, that a great proportion of the population had embraced the Waldensian doctrine; it had also made its way into the north and the

furthest east of the empire. Waldensian congregations were to be found in Thuringia, the March of Brandenberg, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Pomerania, Prussia, and Poland."

There is no inducement to deny that some of the ideas of Pierre de Vaud, like some of the ideas of Marsiglio and Ockham, were contributory to the body of independent thought into which Wyclif would be initiated at Oxford in his early manhood. We have seen that Archbishop Langham had thought it necessary to remonstrate with the holders of unsound doctrine at the University when Wyclif was not much over forty-five years of age, and that this doctrine was by no means on all points identical with the conclusions taught by Wyclif ten or twelve years later. How much (if anything) these earlier divagations owed to the Waldensians it is impossible to say, for the inquiry into their character has not been worked out with sufficient detail. If the censors who are bound to begin by regarding Wyclif as a heretic, instead of a restorer of truths which had previously been obscured, mean no more than that some things which he taught had been held on the Continent before he was born, we can readily agree with them.

The point is important, because there are some who have attempted to make Wyclif responsible for all the acts committed by Protestant combatants in the fifteenth century, with about as much reason as is displayed in the charge that he fomented the revolt of the peasants in England. The Czechs and the Germans must be held responsible for their own religious wars; and assuredly there is enough to

account for the fact and for the bitterness of these wars without attributing them in any measure to the imported seditions of the Oxford professor. Wyclif did not even seduce the people of Bohemia and Germany from their spiritual obedience and orthodoxy. They were Waldensians or Beghards before they had heard his name. They were heretics, and well on the way to being rebels, before the Church of Rome began to turn against herself the fatal weapon of her own corruption. "Too little attention," to cite Professor Pastor once more, "has hitherto been bestowed on the revolutionary spirit of hatred of the Church and the clergy, which had taken hold of the masses in different parts of Germany. Together with the revolt against the Church, a social revolution was openly advocated. A chronicler, writing at Mayence in the year 1401, declared that the cry of 'Death to the Priests,' which had long been whispered in secret, was now the watchword of the day."

It is evident that, both on the Continent and in England, these two revolutions were proceeding side by side, and that, although they assisted each other, they were due to different predisposing causes. That they should have been confounded together by the authorities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was no more than natural; and it would have been strange if the champions of orthodoxy had not availed themselves of every opportunity of impressing upon temporal rulers and magnates that their interests were attacked by the teachers of heresy. The papal legates in the fifteenth century, adopting the

language of popes and cardinals, invariably preached the extermination of heretics on the ground that they undermined all authority, that they would rob not merely the Church but also the Kings and the nobles, that they encouraged the refusal of taxes and other dues to rulers who could not stand a test of morality, and that their doctrines would soon reduce the wealthy to beggary and the State to anarchy. If there had not been at the same time an internecine war of pope against pope, bishop against bishop, and priest against priest, this dead set against the heretics in every country would have been far more effectual. As it was, the rulers of the earth were filled with panic, and the persistence of the new ideas was maintained in spite of every effort to stamp them out.

Historians of the Roman Church have recognised the magnitude of the disaster which fell upon Christendom at the time of the Schism, though perhaps they have not always seen it in its true proportions. The demoralisation consequent on the "Babylonian Captivity," and on the return of Gregory to Rome, contributed not a little, as we have seen, to the immunity of Wyclif, and enabled him to put forth his plea for reform, from his vantage-ground of Oxford, with an authority and a deliberation which he could not otherwise have hoped for. If Rome had been free and unfettered, it is urged by her historians, she would have nipped such heresy as Wyclif's in the bud; the tide of "rationalism" might have been completely turned, and the unity of the Church might never have been broken. No doubt there would have been a notable difference in the

Christian world if Pope Boniface had never given himself away in his quarrel with Philip of France; if the captive popes at Avignon had had the courage to confine themselves to the spiritual sphere, and to abandon their secular ambitions; if Gregory had not hurried back to the seething intrigues of Rome, against the judgment of his cardinals, and under the patronage of the well-meaning but irresponsible nun, Catherine of Siena. The unity of the Church might indeed have been preserved ; and if we could suppose it probable, or even possible, that this might have been done by a spontaneous reform of abuses from within—by the expulsion of strained dogma and depraved morals without forcing saintly men like John Wyclif into the position of heretics—it is manifest how great a disaster the acknowledged guardians of the Church would have avoided.

In any exhaustive history of the English people and the Anglican Church in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it would be necessary to bring to the front every incident and detail bearing upon the relations of the Church and the people, to study every indication of popular enthusiasm or prelatical tyranny, and to develop anew every fading feature of a deeply interesting picture. The work would be well worth doing, and to do it thoroughly would compensate the labour of a lifetime. Here it is not possible to go beyond some further suggestion of the magnitude, importance, and permanence of Wyclif's achievement. He had not only embodied and vocalised the aspirations for reform which he found at Oxford in his early days: he had infused into the

movement so much of new energy and virility that the Reformation in England was virtually effected at the moment of his death, and there was nothing to come but the outward and political manifestations of its completeness. Lollardy, in fact, was Protestantism in all its essential features—predestinarianism, constructive pantheism, as its ecclesiastical censors are wont to complain,—but in any case the Protestantism which won for England the open Bible and the prayer-book, which overthrew the monasteries, the Orders, the Roman obedience, and the mass. It was not Cranmer, nor Cromwell, nor Henry VIII. and his two Protestant children, who banished papal authority from the Anglican Church. They were the accidents, or at most the instruments of a victory already accomplished. For the true moment of victory, and for the effective Reformer, we must look back to the fourteenth century.

The history of England between the reigns of Richard II. and Henry VIII. seems to be more fully dominated than historians have generally admitted by the great forces of religious, moral, and social upheaval which had come to maturity in the lifetime of Wyclif. The outcome of the religious upheaval was Lollardy. The effect of the moral upheaval was an earnest, evangelical spirit, a somewhat stern and harsh puritanism, a more pure and consequently more refined conduct on the part, especially, of the poorer clergy and their congregations. By the social upheaval there was created in England, between the Plantagenet and Tudor epochs, nothing less than the English people—a people emancipated, dignified by

independent industry, annealed by common interests and resolutions, energetic, honest, and self-respecting. These were the operative forces which in fact produced the people of England as we know them to-day, which worked with silent and subtle machinery amidst the transient din and chaos of the fifteenth century.

We are apt to be misled by such terms as the "Wars of the Roses," the "Lancastrian and Yorkist parties," the "Lollards" described as a mere persecuted sect, and "Jack Cade's rebellion." We have had, perhaps, too much of the mere story of White Rose and Red Rose, and too little of the history which explains who they were that fought, and why they fought, and what depended on the issue of each battle. In this sense, the history of the English people may almost be said to have been begun by Green. Up to his time it had been a sealed book ; the seals are broken, but even now the pages are no more than half exposed. Green shows us how, from the Peasants' Revolt, from the persecution of Courtenay and the death of Wyclif, Lollardy was dispersed but not destroyed—how, stricken down and left for dead by the authorities, the spirit of religious independence revived amongst its friends and permeated many classes of the population. "All the religious and social discontent of the time floated instinctively to this new centre ; the socialist dreams of the peasantry, the new and keener spirit of personal morality, the hatred of the friars, the jealousy of the great lords towards the prelacy, the fanaticism of the Puritan zealot, were blended together in a

common hostility to the Church, and a common resolve to substitute personal religion for its dogmatic and ecclesiastical system." The reaction of this spirit on the political movements of the day followed as a matter of course. "Nobles, like the Earl of Salisbury, and at a later time Sir John Oldcastle, placed themselves openly at the head of the cause, and threw open their gates as a refuge for its missionaries. London in its hatred of the clergy was fiercely Lollard. It was in vain that the clergy attempted to stifle the new movement by their old weapon of persecution. The jealousy entertained by the baronage and gentry of every pretension of the Church to secular power foiled its efforts to make persecution effective. Powerless as the efforts of the Church were for purposes of repression, they were effective in arousing the temper of the Lollards into a bitter and fanatical hatred of their persecutors. The Lollard teachers directed their fiercest invectives against the wealth and secularity of the great Churchmen. In a formal petition to Parliament they mingled denunciations of the riches of the clergy with an open profession of disbelief in transubstantiation, priesthood, pilgrimages, and image worship, and a demand, which illustrates the strange medley of opinions which jostled together in the new movement, that war might be declared unchristian."

How large a part Wyclif had borne in the assertion of this influence, political as well as religious, the reader of the preceding pages will be in a position to judge.

Lollardy was, in fact, the keystone of the arch whereon the newer liberties of Englishmen are supported. In the reign of Richard II. the followers of Wyclif were virtually under royal protection ; they were respectfully listened to by Parliament and King ; their patron, Salisbury, was potent at Court ; and not even Courtenay or Arundel was able to take any effective measures against them. For a time, in spite of all that the Church could do, they steadily increased in number and strength, and for the remainder of the fourteenth century they enjoyed comparative immunity. But the instability of the King ruined both himself and all who depended on him. Richard had thoroughly alienated the Church. His quarrel with and banishment of Archbishop Arundel, which may have been to some extent justified by the intrigues of Arundel and his brother, hastened his own deposition and death. The head of the English clergy and the head of the House of Lancaster were exiles at the same moment, and it was at the invitation of Arundel, representing a powerful party in London, that the son of John of Gaunt returned to England and usurped the Crown. Henry IV. never forgot how much he owed to the Church ; and indeed the three Lancastrian Kings continued for the next sixty years to rely upon the clergy and to play into their hands.

The persecution of the Lollards now began in earnest, and Arundel devoted the rest of his life to an unwearying effort to destroy both them and their teaching. In Oxford the memory of Wyclif was still affectionately and courageously preserved. The

University, which had successfully resisted the authority of the Bishops of Lincoln, afterwards contested the claims of the Archbishops of Canterbury to exercise a right of visitation. Arundel, with shrewd judgment and calculation, had turned his attention to Oxford from the beginning of his primacy, probably considering that the best way to deal with a flood is to cut off the springs that feed it. It was ostensibly on the solicitation of a strong party in the faculties of law and divinity that he announced his intention to come down and assert his right in 1397; but he was foiled by the production of a bull from Boniface IX., declaring the University exempt. It is characteristic of that age of lame and ineffectual resolutions, that the popes themselves were found impeding the efforts of their legates to crush out a most formidable heresy—for it is evident that there was an intimate relation between the prosecution of the Oxford Wycliffites and the question of archiepiscopal visitation. Official appeals on both points reached Arundel simultaneously, and he went so far as to declare, in a letter to the Chancellor, that he had been informed “that almost the whole University was affected by heretical gravity.”

The phrase seems to have stuck in the gizzard of the Chancellor and Regents, for we find it again in a letter under the University seal, apparently addressed to the Archbishop some time later. This document bears witness to the manner in which Wyclif's repute was still cherished by the men who personally remembered him. “His conversation from his youth

to his death was so praiseworthy and honest in the University that he never gave any offence, nor was he aspersed with any mark of infamy or sinister suspicion ; but in answering, reading, preaching, and determining, he behaved himself laudably, as a valiant champion of the truth, and catholicly vanquished by sentences of Holy Scripture all such as by their wilful beggary blasphemed the religion of Christ. This doctor was not convicted of heretical gravity, or by our prelates delivered to be burned after his burial. For God forbid that our prelates should have condemned a man of so great probity for a heretic, who had not his equal in all the University, in his writings of logic, philosophy, divinity, morality, and the speculative sciences.” \*

Certainly there is more evidence of courage in this letter than is apparent in the attitude of some of the Wycliffites in 1382 and the following years. Not long afterwards, in 1407, Arundel held a Provincial Synod at Oxford, having possibly found a more amenable Chancellor—for the dispute concerning his right of visitation was not yet adjusted. It was ordered on the authority of the Church that no works of Wyclif should be used in the universities, and that all works written in Wyclif’s lifetime should pass under the censorship of the universities and the Archbishop before they were used in the schools. Apparently Oxford faced the Primate without flinching, until the accession of Pope John XXIII. in 1410. John sent Arundel a bull reversing that of Boniface in the matter of visitations ; and it was about the

\* The passage is printed as quoted by Lewis.

same time that the Archbishop prevailed on Congregation to nominate a committee of twelve doctors in order to draw up a list of Wyclif's errors. The will was everything in a search of this kind, and out of fourteen works examined—and subsequently burnt at Carfax—the committee were fortunate enough to light upon two hundred and sixty-seven instances of false teaching.

By the time that the Council of Constance met in 1414 to put an end to the scandal of the Schism, to burn John Huss, and to lay a solemn curse on the memory of Wyclif, somebody had increased this catalogue of errors to more than three hundred. The formal record of the Council in regard to the condemnation of Wyclif is as follows:

“ By the authority of the sentence and decree of the Roman Council, and of the mandate of the apostolic see, the Council proceeded with the condemnation of John Wyclif and his memory: and, having published injunctions to cite all who would defend the said Wyclif or his memory, and nobody appearing for that purpose, and having moreover examined witnesses of the impenitence and final obstinacy of the said Wyclif, and the things being proved by evident signs attested by lawful witnesses, the holy Synod did declare and define the said John Wyclif to have been a notorious heretic, and to have died obstinate in heresy, excommunicating him and condemning his memory; and did decree that his body and bones, if they could be distinguished from those of the faithful, should be disinterred, or dug out of the ground, and cast at a distance from the sepulchre of the church.”

Twelve years later, Pope Martin found that the decree of the Council had not been obeyed in England. He wrote an urgent letter on the subject to Richard Flemmyng, Bishop of Lincoln, whom we have encountered already as one of the younger disciples of Wyclif, and who in 1407 was still something of a Wycliffite, though he presently began to receive preferment. Flemmyng, in his old age, was full of zeal for orthodoxy, and brought himself to the point of desecrating his old master's grave and burning his bones.

Orthodoxy would willingly have stamped out everything that Wyclif wrote, with a great deal more into the bargain. Even Caxton, seventy or eighty years after the date of Arundel's Synod at Oxford, never ventured to touch a Wyclif manuscript. Indeed there are comparatively few religious works amongst the fourscore printed books attributed to him and his personal assistants. A Latin psalter appears to be the only complete book of the text of Scripture which found its way into print in the fifteenth century, though there are books of devotion, collections of papal indulgences, and a few orthodox sermons, which bear witness to the fact that the ignoring of Wyclif was not due to any secular exclusiveness amongst the early printers.

The effort to suppress the writings of Wyclif was not confined to England. Two years after the adoption of Arundel's constitutions the Pope appointed a Conference of learned men from the universities of Bonn, Paris, and Oxford to discuss the expediency of burning those heretical writings. Fortunately the hint from Rome was not taken; and it

must be remembered that the authority of Rome was still impaired by the Papal Schism. The Conference was candid enough to say that there were "many true, good, and useful things" in Wyclif, of which the students in the schools ought not to be deprived. The universities were not heroic enough—or were perhaps too heroic—for the popes and archbishops; and in fact it is to them, and especially to the University of Prague, that we owe the preservation of many of Wyclif's works.

The statute of 1401, reviving the punishment of the stake for obstinate heretics, was one of the first acts of the reign of Henry IV., and Arundel had at once availed himself of it by passing censure on the Lollard priest, Sawtre, and handing him over to be dealt with by the secular arm. The enactment of this statute did not lead to many burnings in England; but it is a mistake to conclude that it had effected the purpose of those who obtained it. No doubt to some extent it would drive heresy beneath the surface, and close the mouths of the wilder sort of heretics, whose noise had been in excess of their courage. But Lollardy remained an open profession, and if the spirit of the age had allowed many scandals, such as those exhibited by the deaths of Sawtre, Badby, and Lord Cobham,\* the bishops and judges would certainly not have lacked victims amongst the followers of Wyclif, who courted the utmost terrors

\* Cobham was a personal and most devoted follower of Wyclif. "Before God and man," he said on his trial for heresy, "I profess solemnly here that I never abstained from sin until I knew Wyclif, whom ye so much disdain."

of the law. It was an age in which many parts of England were involved in almost constant civil war. The Lancastrians and the Church had made common cause, and their enemies combined against them with arms in their hands. In all the revolts that marked the reign of Henry IV., the Lollards everywhere took an active and a prominent part. The bitter hostility of the clergy towards the men whose very existence was a reproach against them was well illustrated by the conduct of some of the highest authorities of the Church and religious Orders, when they heard that Salisbury had been slain in battle. "His gory head was welcomed into London by a procession of abbots and bishops, who went out singing psalms of thanksgiving to meet it"; and amongst these exulting professors of Christianity there were probably some who had taken part in the barefoot litany of 1382, which celebrated the condemnation of Wyclif.

It was war to the knife between the Lancastrians and the Lollards—so completely had the earlier traditions of the first Duke of Lancaster been abandoned by his family. Parliament was still subject to the violent and rapid fluctuations which we have already observed in the reigns of Edward and Richard. If it was by no means always on the side of the clergy, still it was nearly always prejudiced against the Lollards as a fighting party. The survival of pure Wycliffism was conspicuous enough in the repeated demands made by the House of Commons for the appropriation of Church property to secular and popular uses. Demands to this effect were made by the Lack-Learning Parliament in 1404, by

the Parliament of 1410, and at least once thereafter. Shakspeare may be cited in this connection, not indeed as an historical authority, but for an illustration of the well-known facts. In the opening lines of *Henry the Fifth*, Chicheley says to his brother prelate :

" My lord, I 'll tell you, that self bill is urg'd  
Which in the eleventh year of the last king's reign  
Was like, and had indeed against us pass'd  
But that the scambling and unquiet time  
Did push it out of further question. . . .  
For all the temporal lands which men devout  
By testament have given to the Church  
Would they strip from us ; being valued thus—  
As much as would maintain, to the king's honour,  
Full fifteen earls, and fifteen hundred knights,  
Six thousand and two hundred good esquires ;  
And, to relief of lazars and weak age,  
Of indigent faint souls, past corporal toil,  
A hundred almshouses, right well supplied ;  
And to the coffers of the king beside,  
A thousand pounds by the year. Thus runs the bill.  
*Ely.* This would drink deep.  
*Canterbury.* 'T would drink the cup and all."

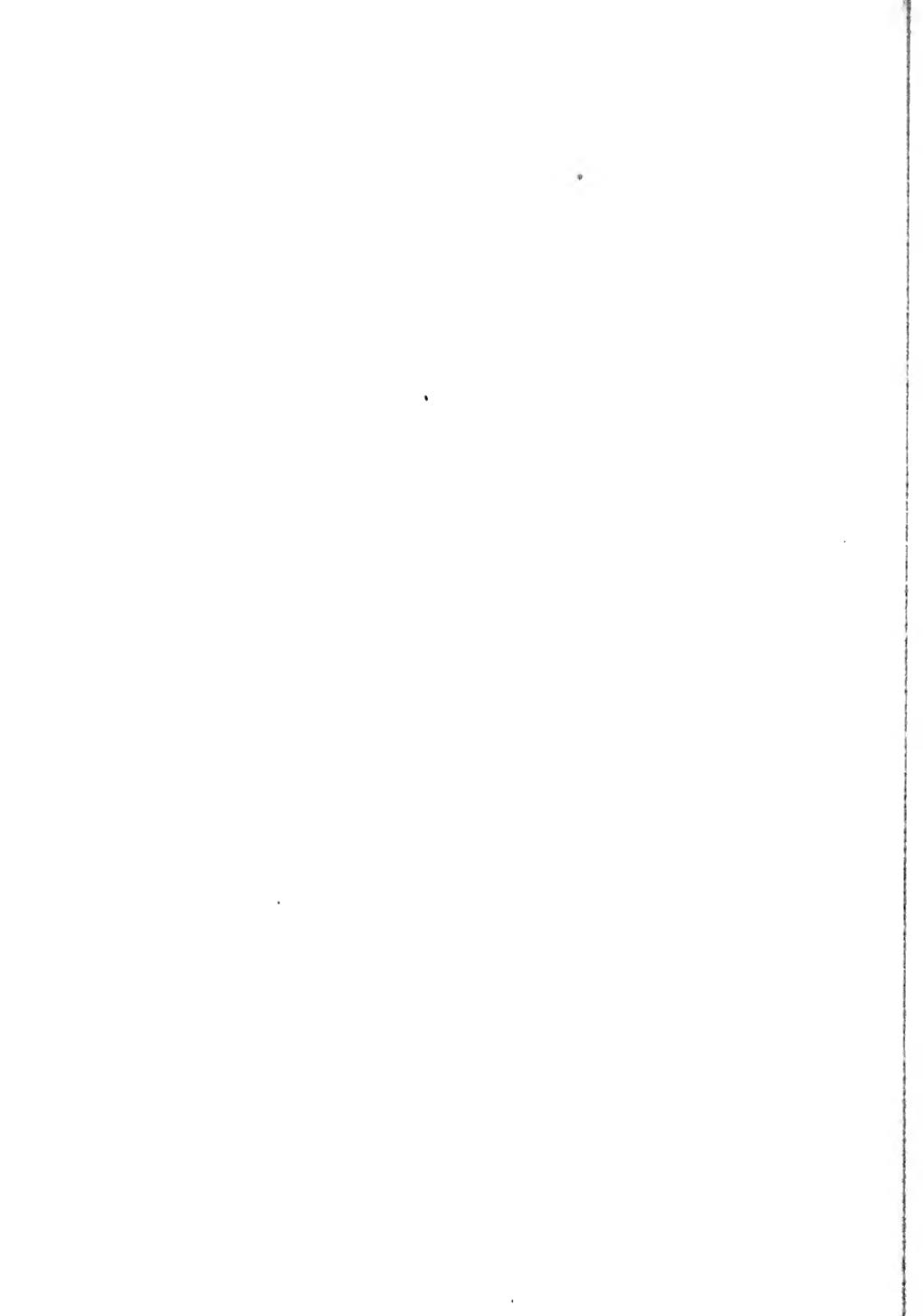
On the whole, the Parliaments of the Henrys were decidedly inimical to the men whom Englishmen had been taught to hold responsible for the rebellion of 1381, and who were certainly disaffected towards King and Church. On the meeting of the second Parliament of Henry V., the Lollards were accused of disturbing the peace of the realm, and attempting to subvert the faith, and to destroy the King and the law of the land. An Act was subsequently passed which provided that all officers on their admission



ARCHBISHOP CHICHELEY, FOUNDER OF ALL SOULS.

1414-43.

BY J. FABER.



should take an oath to destroy Lollardy, and to assist the bishops therein ; that "heretics convict" should forfeit their lands, goods, and chattels ; that the justices should have power to inquire into offences against the Act, and to issue a *capias*—with other stringent provisions of the same kind.

Archbishop Chicheley, who succeeded Arundel in 1414, did his best to eclipse the zeal and fame of his predecessor. In 1416 he enjoined all his suffragans and archdeacons in the province of Canterbury "diligently to inquire twice every year after persons suspected of heresy." Wherever heretics were reported to dwell, three or more of that parish should be obliged "to take an oath that they would certify in writing to the suffragans, archdeacons, or their commissaries, what persons were heretics, or kept private conventicles, or *differed in life and manners from the common conversation of the faithful*, or asserted heresies or errors, or had any suspected books written in the vulgar English tongue, or received, favoured, or were conversant with any persons suspected of error or heresies." The diocesans, upon information received, were to "issue out process against the accused persons, and if they did not deliver them over to the secular court, yet they should commit them to *perpetual or temporary imprisonment*, as the nature of the cause required, at least until the sitting of the next Convocation."

This device of the Archbishop's amounted, clearly, to nothing short of a petty Inquisition in every parish, and the words in italics show how easily it

might be converted into an instrument of the most outrageous tyranny over the innermost thoughts and feelings. There we have another instance of what has so frequently been displayed in the history of mankind : spiritual authority, pushed to a logical extreme, pronounces its final edict in the sentence, “I kill you because I do not like you.” It was the *μὴ εἰραί* of Aristotle, translated into an Athanasian curse.

Archbishop Chicheley has been roundly accused of instigating Henry V. to renew the war with France in order to relieve the strain at home, and to turn aside the danger with which the Church was menaced. Of course these were amongst the natural effects of the war, which produced another “scambling and unquiet time,” and did much to postpone the religious and other evolutions in England, already more than due.

Though the evidence becomes fainter as we advance more than half a century beyond Wyclif’s death, yet there is ample proof of both the religious and the political survival of Lollardy in England. It may be true that we do not hear much more of the term in the pages of the fifteenth-century chronicles ; but, unfortunately, some of these chronicles are more distinguished for what they omit than for what they include. And, after all, if every scrap of direct evidence on the subject had been brought together, the fact would remain that we need no proof of this kind to assure us that the spirit and conviction of the Lollards, having once taken hold of so large a fraction of the nation, could not pos-

sibly die out again. The love of truth and independence, the hatred of religious tyranny and the revolt against it, would not be suppressed by such a feeble reign of terror as the Lancastrians, the schismatic popes, and the plethoric English clergy were able to set up ; nor would they disappear because the country was plunged for another generation into a wanton and disastrous war.

A mighty change had passed over the nation between 1380 and 1450. The men who followed Cade to London, the soldiers who gathered under the banners of York, Warwick, and Salisbury (and who in the course of the civil war displayed their hatred of the prelacy by assassinating several bishops who fell into their hands), were sons and heirs of the Lollards who had revolted against Henry IV. and Henry V. Whether they professed to be Lollards or not—and some of them professed it—they were one with their fathers in revolting against the Lancastrian and ecclesiastical tyrannies, against the restrictions of liberty, the overbearing of the nobles, and the persistent aggressions of the Church and the Crown. No doubt they revolted blindly—but it was under the compulsion of a blind necessity, and with an instinctive faith in the principles which they had imbibed in their youth.

And finally, when the Tudors sat firmly on the throne of England, when Parliament was in abeyance, and the tyranny of the monarch had become greater than ever, was it merely fortuitous that the papal hierarchy and the monasteries should have been swept away whilst the prerogative of the Crown

was steadily increased and strengthened? Surely not. The contract made in 1399 between the son of Gaunt and the representative of Rome in England was perhaps the only thing which could at that time have retained the Anglican Church within the Latin communion. When the Lancastrians had gone, the monarchy sought and discovered new bonds of national allegiance, and the Church was no longer indispensable. Crown and Church, henceforth, could not be simultaneously powerful, and the monarch sacrificed the Church in order to purchase the loyalty and obedience of the people. There was at any rate so much of political philosophy under the policy of Edward IV., and still more under the policy of Henry VIII. and his counsellors—virtual if not expressed, and in effect if not in deliberate purpose.

The sum of the whole matter, so far as the reader of the present volume is specially concerned in the historical developments of the fifteenth century, is this: If the Roman authority in England, and the English hierarchy as representing Rome, had been fatally undermined in the fourteenth century—if, buttressed up by the Lancastrian Kings, the prelatical system shook to its fall under the Tudors—if, when the political moment arrived, the nation stood ready for the change, ready and eager for the expulsion of the monks and the rupture with Rome—all this was mainly and primarily due to the innovating spirit of the Schoolmen, and above all to the life and work of John Wyclif. He sowed the seed that raised this harvest; he spoke the hardy words that grew into counsels of courage and perfection; he spread

wide the pages which, in the awakened conscience of every independent Christian, were to replace the authority of fallible men.

In a word, Wyclif was no mere forerunner of the Protestant Reformation, but the Reformer in chief. In the intellectual domain, in the field of ideas and of spiritual activity, he originated the movement which had its issue in the sixteenth century, when the Tudor monarchs rode but did not raise the storm. For one reason or another Wyclif was long excluded from his proper place in history; but the nineteenth century, bringing together for the first time all the main contemporary documents, has been able to take the true bearings of the epoch of religious reform. And perhaps no one hereafter will attempt to explain the conduct of Henry VIII., of Thomas Cromwell, and the martyred bishops, without beginning his story from the last of the Schoolmen, and from the golden prime of the University of Oxford.



## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

A.D.	FACTS IN WYCLIF'S LIFE	KINGS OF ENGLAND	ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY
		Edward I.	Winchelsey.
		1307. Edward II.	
			1313. Reynolds.
1320	Born (at Wycliffe or Speswell?) Son of Roger and Catherine Wyclif.		
1301 to 1353	1335. At a grammar school in Oxford?	1327. Edward III.	1327. Simon Meopham. 1333. John Stratford.
	{ Probably heard Ockham, Bradwardine, and Fitzralph; and read Marsiglio and Cesena. Wyclif specially owns his obligations to Augustine and Grosteste. According to James he was a Doctor of Divinity soon after 1355?? Beneficed in Oxford? (James).		1348. John Ufford. 1349. Thomas Bradwardine. 1349. Simon Islip.

## CONNECTED WITH WYCLIF.

POPES OF ROME	KINGS OF FRANCE	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
Boniface VIII.	Philip IV.	Increasing power of English Parliament. 1302. Bull <i>Unam Sanctam</i> .
1303. Benedict XI. [At Avignon.]		1303. Arrest of Boniface. { Dante. Petrarch. Boccaccio.
1305. Clement V.		1305. Popes at Avignon. 1307. Statute of Provisors (1). 1311. Council of Vienne : Olivi condemned.
1316. John XXII.	1314. Louis X. 1315. John I. 1316. Philip V.	
	1323. Charles IV.	1322. Franciscan Congregation at Perugia (for evangelical poverty). 1324. <i>Defensor Pacis</i> written.
	1328. Philip VI.	1328. Lewis of Bavaria at Rome. Antipope Peter. 1333. English tribute to Rome suspended.
1334. Benedict XII.		1338. Scots and French Wars. 1340. John of Gaunt and Chaucer born? First lay Chancellor.
1342. Clement VI.		1343. Parliament petitions King against Papal provisions. 1346. Crecy. 1347. Rienzi's Revolution.
		1349. Worst visitation of the Plague. Flagellants come to the front.
	1350. John II.	1350. Papal Jubilee: lavish gift to the Church. 1351. Statute of Provisors. 1352. Statutes of Labourers. 1353. Statute of Præmunire (1).
1352. Innocent VI.		

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

A.D.	FACTS IN WYCLIF'S LIFE	KINGS OF ENGLAND	ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY
1354 to 1360	1356. Fellow of Merton? Fellow of Balliol (date unrecor-ded). Master of Balliol (date unre-corded). Lord of the Manor of Wy-cliffe (a knight's fee)?	Edward III.	Simon Islip.
1361 to 1365	1361. Maintains authority of Uni-versity against the Friars? Rector of Fillingham (col-lege living). 1363. In residence at Queen's. Presents W. Wycliffe to family living of Wycliffe? 1365. King's Chaplain. Probably begins to preach in London. Lectures on Divinity at Ox-ford. Writes scholastic works — <i>De Esse, De Compositio-ne Hominis</i> , etc.	Edward III.	
1366 to 1370	1366. Called upon by Parliament to show cause against pay-ing tribute to Rome: <i>De-terminatio quædam de Dom-inio.</i> 1368. In Oxford again. 1369. Presents H. Hugate of Bal-liol to Wycliffe rectory? Exchanges Fillingham for the poorer living of Lud-garshall.	Edward III.	1366. S. Langham. 1368. W. Whittle-sea.
1371	1370. Doctor of Divinity.  Personal influence of Wyclif at Court, over Princess of Wales, Lancaster, Lord Latimer, Alice Perrers, etc. Also over Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Berkeley and many others.	Edward III.	

## CONNECTED WITH WYCLIF.

POPES	KINGS OF FRANCE	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
Innocent VI.	John II.	1354. Turks cross the Hellespont. 1356. Poitiers. 1357. Edward refuses tribute to the Pope. Fitzralph attacks Franciscans at Rome. Ockham dies. 1358. Papal envoys executed in England. 1360. Treaty of Brétigny.
1362. Urban V.		1362. Jubilee of Edward's life. English language adopted in the courts.
	1364. Charles V.	1365. Suits in Papal court forbidden again.
		1366. Parliament refuses tribute to Pope. Wykeham Bishop of Winchester.  1367. Wykeham Chancellor of England.  1369. Portsmouth burnt by the French.
1371. Gregory XI.		1370. Sack of Limoges.  1371. Removal of ecclesiastics from offices of state on petition of Commons. Heavier taxation of the Church. Reverses in French and Spanish Wars.

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

A.D.	FACTS IN WYCLIF'S LIFE	KINGS OF ENGLAND	ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY
		Edward III.	W. Whittlesea.
1372 to 1375	1374. Appointed by Crown to living of Lutterworth. Appointed on Commission to confer with Papal legates at Bruges. 1375. Resides at Bruges as Commissioner, fifty days. Refuses the prebend of Aust.		1375. S. Sudbury.
	1376. Complaints of Wyclif made by the friars to the English bishops, and then to Rome.		
1376 to 1377	1377. Summoned to St. Paul's by Courtenay; attended by Lancaster and Percy. Citizens break up the meeting. In residence at Black Hall, Oxford. Five Papal bulls against Wyclif, who makes his defence at Oxford and in Parliament. Wyclif, consulted by Parliament as to payment of Peter's Pence, refutes the claim, but declines to advise non-payment.	1377. Richard II.	

## CONNECTED WITH WYCLIF.

POPES	KINGS OF FRANCE	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
Gregory XI.		<p>1372. English navy destroyed.</p> <p>1373. Mission to Avignon about provisions, etc. Courtenay in Convocation demands relief for the Church. Commission on alien incumbents.</p> <p>1374. Peace with France: mediation of Pope.</p>
		<p>1375. Conferences at Bruges, political and ecclesiastical. Compromises effected in both cases.</p> <p>Senility of the King. Great influence of Alice Perrers. Parliament not summoned this year.</p> <p>Courtenay Bishop of London.</p>
		<p>1376. Good Parliament. Ecclesiastics recalled. Prince of Wales dies. Parliament overruled. Wykeham disgraced and Speaker imprisoned. Pope excommunicated the Florentines. Attacks on foreigners in England.</p> <p>1377. Courtenay demands the restoration of Wykeham. Commons packed by John of Gaunt. Attempt to curtail the privileges of the City. Riots in London and Westminster.</p> <p>First poll-tax.</p> <p>Death of Edward III. War renewed with France.</p>

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

A.D.	FACTS IN WYCLIF'S LIFE	KINGS OF ENGLAND	ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY
1378 to 1380	1378. Cited to Lambeth; re-asserts his conclusions. Princess of Wales protects him. Londoners again interrupt. He withdraws to Lutterworth or Oxford.  1379. Serious illness at Oxford. Friars call upon him for retraction. He defies them. Sends his defence and challenge to Rome.  Great literary activity: writes <i>De Veritate Sancte Scripturae</i> .	Richard II.	
1381 to 1382	1381. Begins to lecture at Oxford against transubstantiation, and carries many with him. Inquiry by Chancellor Ber顿 and a Council of twelve. Wyclif's doctrine condemned, and he is forbidden to lecture. Appeals to the King; John of Gaunt asks him to desist.  Writes his <i>Confession</i> or <i>Apologia</i> , claiming the authority of the earlier Church. Many replies from monks and others. Proceedings against the Poor Priests.  1382. Accused of complicity in the Peasants' Revolt. Cited by Courtenay before a Synod at the priory of the Black Friars in London. He does not attend (through illness or otherwise), but twenty-four of his conclusions are condemned, for heresy or error. (The Earthquake Synod.) His chief supporters condemned at subsequent meetings.  He re-asserts his conclusions at Oxford.	Richard II.	1381. W. Courtenay.

## CONNECTED WITH WYCLIF.

POPES	KINGS OF FRANCE	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
SCHISM. 1378 { R. Urban VI. A. Clement VII.		1378. England acknowledges Pope Urban. Courtenay excommunicates Lancaster's friends. Parliament sits at Gloucester. John of Gaunt reconciled to the Church. 1379. Sudbury appointed Chancellor.
	1380. Charles VI.	1380. New and more stringent poll-tax imposed. John of Gaunt Envoy to Scotland and Lieutenant of the Marches.
		1381. Ruthless exactation of second poll-tax. Peasants' Revolt ; the march on London ; terms granted. Cruel suppression, and repudiation of the terms by Parliament ; 7,000 executed. Serfdom virtually ended. Courtenay Archbishop and Chancellor.
		1382. Richard II. marries Anne of Bohemia. Parliament calls on Courtenay to proceed against Wyyclif and others. He assembles a Synod, sends Stokys to Oxford, reduces Rygge and others to submission. Processional Litany in London, Whitsunday. Convocation of St. Frideswide's, Oxford.

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

A.D.	FACTS IN WYCLIF'S LIFE AND RELATING TO HIM	KINGS OF ENGLAND	ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY
1382.	(Cont.) Greater literary activity. Collects his sermons; writes a number of English tracts, in which he denounces the Papal crusade, the conduct of the Friars, etc. Engaged on English translation of the Bible.	Richard II.	W. Courtenay.
1382 to 1384	First stroke of paralysis. 1383. Persecution of his friends. Some fall away. Continued literary activity. Writes the <i>Trialogus</i> . Cited to Rome. Excuses himself on the ground of inability to travel. 1384. Has a second stroke at Lutterworth, Dec. 28th, and dies Dec. 31st.		
1385 to 1401	1385. Buried in the church at Lutterworth. Second text of his Bible prepared by Purvey. (The Pleshy Bible, copied for Thomas Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, murdered 1397, was valued amongst his effects at 40s. It is now in the British Museum.)	Richard II.	
1397.	Arundel presides over a Synod which condemns eighteen conclusions of Wyclif.		1396. T. Arundel.
1401.	Jerome of Prague and others carry many works of Wyclif to Bohemia.	1399. Henry IV.	

## CONNECTED WITH WYCLIF.

POPES	KINGS OF FRANCE	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
	Charles VI.	<p>1382. (<i>Cont.</i>) Bishop Despencer's expedition (papal crusade) to Flanders ordered by Urban. Bulls and plenary indulgence proclaimed in England. Active assistance of the Friars.</p> <p>1383. Crusade from May to September; disastrous result. The Scots raid Northumberland. John of Gaunt retaliates. Chaucer assisted by Lancaster. Inclines to Church reform and ecclesiastical poverty. Gower in his Latin and English poems attacks the peasants, Lollardism, and the policy of Richard II. (1381-97).</p>
1389. R. Boniface IX.		<p>1385. Commons demand secularisation of Church property.</p> <p>1388. Courtenay (under parliamentary powers) proceeds against heretics and seizes books. Lays Leicester under interdict, '89.</p> <p>1390. Statute of Provisors enlarged.</p> <p>1391. Statute of Mortmain confirmed.</p> <p>1393. Second and more stringent Statute of <i>Præmunire</i>. Peace between England and France.</p> <p>1395. Parliament petitions against alien clerics.</p> <p>1396. Archbishop Arundel opens severely against the Lollards. Accused of intrigues and banished, '97.</p>
1394. A. Benedict XIII.		<p>1399. Duke of Lancaster dies. Richard II. deposed.</p> <p>1401. Statute <i>De Hæretico Comburendo</i>. Sawtre burned.</p>

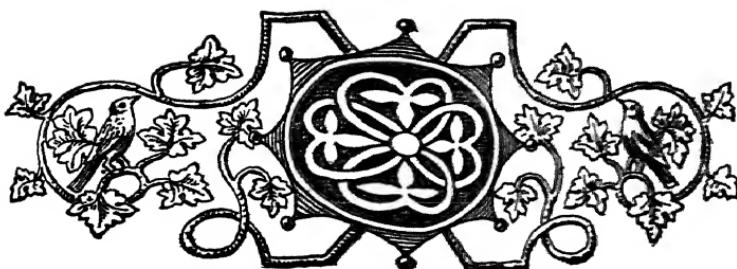
## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

A. D.	FACTS RELATING TO WYCLIF	KINGS OF ENGLAND	ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY
	1403. Huss protests against condemnation of Wycliffism.	Henry IV.	T. Arundel.
	1407. Arundel's Council at Oxford.		
	1409. Two hundred and sixty-seven errors gathered by an Oxford committee from Wyclif's works. The books burned at Carfax.		
	1410. Papal bull against Wycliffism in Bohemia. Seventeen works condemned. Huss and others protest; two hundred copies publicly burned.		
	1411. Huss excommunicated.		
1402 to 1455	1413. Wyclif's books burned by order of the Council of Rome.	1413. Henry V.	
			1414. H. Chicheley.
	1415. The Council of Constance confirms the condemnation of the Council of Rome, and orders Wyclif's bones to be exhumed and cast forth.		
	1416. Chicheley's Inquisition.		
		1422. Henry VI.	
	1423. Condemnation of Wyclif by the Council of Pavia.		
	1428. Bishop Flemmyng exhumes and burns Wyclif's bones at Lutterworth.		1443. J. Stafford.
			1452. J. Kemp.
			1454. T. Bourchier.

## CONNECTED WITH WYCLIF.

POPES	KINGS OF FRANCE	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1404. R. Innocent VII.		1404 and 1410. The Commons renew their demand for secularisation.
1406. R. Gregory XII.		The Lollards take sides against Henry IV. at Shrewsbury and elsewhere.
1409. Alexander V.		1409. Council of Pisa. Gregory and Benedict deposed.
1410. John XXIII.		1410. Badby of Evesham burned.
(Interregnum: May 29, 1415-Nov. 11, 1417.)		1411. Arundel asserts his right to visit Oxford. 1413. Henry IV. d. Sir John Oldcastle (Lord Cobham) condemned as a heretic. Council at Rome. 1414. Abp. Arundel d. One hundred alien priories dissolved in England. 1414-18. Council of Constance. John XXIII. deposed. End of Schism. 1415. Huss burned at Constance. Battle of Agincourt.
1417. Martin V.		1417. Cobham burned in England; afterwards Claydon and Tailleur.
	1422. Charles VII.	1418. Beaufort, son of John of Gaunt, made Cardinal; afterwards Kemp and Bourchier. 1423. Council of Pavia. 1431. Council of Basle. 1450. Rising in Kent. 1455. Civil war breaks out in England. Indications of Lollard or anti-ecclesiastical leanings on the Yorkist side.





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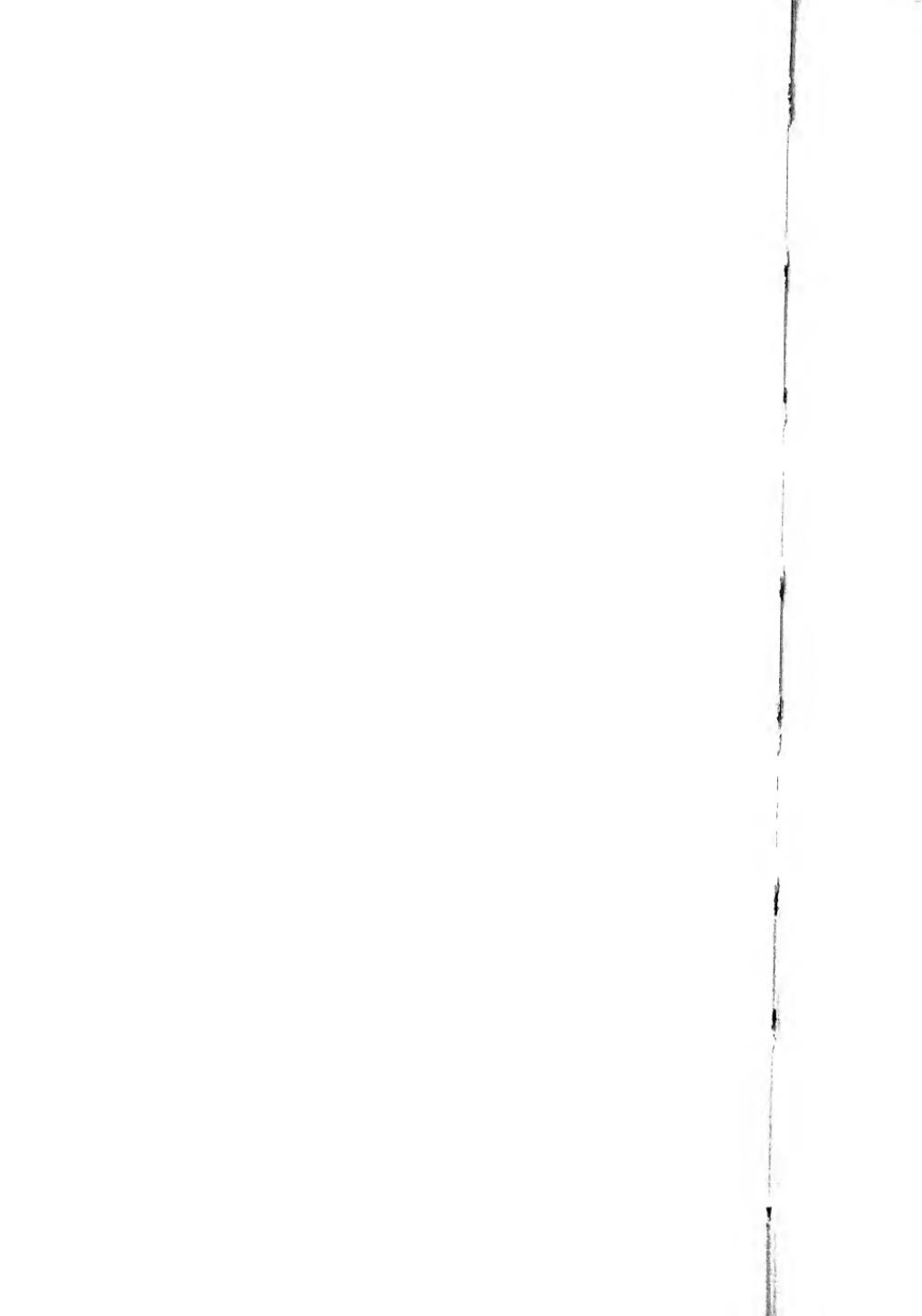
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